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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": review of gender mainstreaming in entities of the United Nations system

Measures taken and progress achieved in the follow-up to and implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, with an assessment of progress made on mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted in response to Commission on the Status of Women resolution 48/4 and General Assembly resolution 59/168, outlines achievements and good practices in United Nations entities in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Based on inputs received from United Nations entities, the report analyses efforts made by the United Nations system to support implementation at national level. The report contains recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women on enhancing implementation.

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I. Introduction

1. The Beijing Declaration, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, urged the United Nations system to contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Platform for Action emphasized that, in order to ensure effective implementation and enhance the work for the advancement of women at the national, subregional/regional and international levels, the United Nations system should promote an active and visible policy of gender mainstreaming, inter alia, in the monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes; and that responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the Platform for Action and the integration of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system must rest at the highest levels. The regional commissions of the United Nations were requested to promote and assist the pertinent national institutions in monitoring and implementing the global Platform for Action within their mandates.

2. In the outcome of its twenty-third special session (General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex), the General Assembly called upon organizations of the United Nations system, along with other actors, to support government efforts and, where appropriate, develop complementary programmes of their own to achieve full and effective implementation of the Platform for Action. The United Nations system was further requested to assist Governments, at their request, in incorporating a gender perspective into national development planning, building institutional capacity, developing national action plans or further implementing existing action plans as well as to support non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially women's organizations, to build their capacity to advocate for, implement, assess and follow up on the Platform for Action.

3. In its resolution 59/168, the General Assembly called upon entities of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, to continue to take effective action to achieve the full and effective implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session. It affirmed that, in order to ensure the effective implementation of the strategic objectives, the United Nations system should continue to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming gender perspectives, including through the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the Special Adviser of Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the maintenance of gender units, focal points and gender specialists, and with the active support of all United Nations bodies, and ensuring that all United Nations personnel, especially in the field, receive training on gender perspectives in their work, including gender impact analysis, and that appropriate follow-up is provided.

4. In its resolution 48/4, the Commission on the Status of Women requested the Secretary-General to include an assessment of the implementation of that resolution in his report to the forty-ninth session of the Commission. The General Assembly, in its resolution 59/168, requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women on the follow-up to and progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session, with an assessment of progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system, including by providing information on key

achievements, lessons learned and best practices and to recommend further measures and strategies for future action within the United Nations system.

5. The present report, submitted in response to those resolutions, outlines achievements and good practices in United Nations entities in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including through adopting gender-sensitive policies and strategies, building capacity of staff and developing gender-sensitive tools and methodologies in support of implementation at the national level. It highlights remaining gaps and challenges. The report, which is based on inputs received from United Nations entities, does not attempt to provide a comprehensive overview, but rather to give illustrative examples from entities of the United Nations system.[1] It contains recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women on enhancing the implementation within the United Nations system.

II. Achievements in implementation

A. Policy and strategy development

6. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, the majority of United Nations entities have developed policies on gender equality and the advancement of women. While many of these policies were based on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a renewed momentum was created by the adoption of the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000. Entities also emphasized that Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming, the Millennium Declaration (2000) and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security (2000) facilitated further progress. In 2001-2002, the World Food Programme (WFP) undertook an intensive review and evaluation of its policy commitments to women (1996-2001) and, on the basis of the lessons learned, developed its current gender policy (2003-2007). Building on lessons learned in the implementation of the strategy of the integration of women in the maritime sector (1988), the Action Programme for Equal Opportunities and Advancement of Women in the Maritime Sector (1997-2001) was adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

7. During the last decade, there has been a shift in many United Nations entities towards a more comprehensive approach to achieving gender equality, based on the gender mainstreaming strategy, which requires the adoption of gender-sensitive policies, procedures and programming. In July 2004, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance launched its Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Action Plan to guide efforts to mainstream gender perspectives into humanitarian advocacy and information management, policy development, coordination of humanitarian response and resource mobilization. In 2002, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) adopted a gender mainstreaming strategy that emphasized: the establishment of a network of gender focal points for all units; the identification of training requirements; attention to gender perspectives in meeting agendas, project screening, individual and team work plans; as well as the monitoring of progress. The International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that all its regional offices had adopted gender equality policies and gender

mainstreaming strategies, the most recent being the policy and strategy of the Asian region (2004-2007), which contains detailed indicators and targets and an approved budget for implementation. Similarly, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is currently developing a gender mainstreaming policy, to be introduced in the first quarter of 2005. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) undertook a pilot test on gender and age methodology in 14 countries to provide the basis for the formulation of the organization's Gender Equality Policy.

B. Institutional arrangements

8. Entities developed institutional mechanisms to facilitate effective implementation. Strategic mechanisms include: gender specialist resources, such as gender units and gender focal points; capacity-building of staff; the development and use of methodologies and tools; and monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms.

9. A variety of gender specialist resources have been developed within entities. These resources play a significant role in supporting gender mainstreaming within organizations and promote interorganizational exchange of experiences and good practices through networking. The Women in Habitat Programme of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), which had been in operation since 1991, was merged with the Gender Policy Unit in 1999 to form the current Gender Mainstreaming Unit. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) formed a gender task force to examine ways to improve its approach to gender equality. In 2003, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) established its Centre for Women.

10. Several entities were supported by networks of gender focal points. For example, the Gender Programme Team at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is supported by a global "Gender Knowledge Network", which consists of 134 UNDP gender focal points in country offices and 20 gender specialists working as United Nations Volunteers. Similarly, the network of gender focal points of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is active at 90 of the 200 field missions and has established a working group on gender issues at headquarters. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations appointed a gender adviser at Headquarters and established gender adviser positions in 10 of 17 peacekeeping operations, including the advance mission in the Sudan, for which the Department of Political Affairs retains the lead.

11. A majority of United Nations entities have developed and organized gender sensitization training for staff and partners at both headquarters and in the field. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) organized its first gender training workshop for gender focal points stationed at headquarters and in field offices in January 2004. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) carried out several gender mainstreaming capacity-building workshops for staff at headquarters. In building institutional capacity and promoting organizational transformation, UNDP trained senior managers to ensure dedicated gender expertise in teams. WFP mainstreamed its "Enhanced

Commitments to Women" programme into other corporate training programmes. IMO carried out a series of workshops on gender-planning methodology.

12. Other entities have also taken steps to build institutional capacity. For example, the Department for Disarmament Affairs organized a panel discussion entitled "Making Disarmament More Effective: Men and Women Working Together". In May 2004, the Department of Political Affairs organized a meeting of field presences, at which Special Representatives of the Secretary-General discussed progress and challenges in mainstreaming gender perspectives into their activities.

13. To support the effectiveness of gender capacity-building programmes, entities developed a variety of methodologies and tools. Several entities adopted specific methodologies and tools on gender mainstreaming. For instance, the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Mine Action Service and other members of the Inter-Agency Coordinating Group on Mine Action have developed guidelines for integrating gender perspectives into mine action programmes. A recent initiative by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is the Gender Resource Package for peacekeeping operations, developed to facilitate training of both uniformed and civilian peacekeeping personnel.

14. Efforts were also made to integrate gender perspectives into existing tools. For example, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) ensured that gender perspectives were reflected in its Programme Policy and Procedures Manual and Programme Process Training Manual. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WFP worked together to develop guidelines that integrate gender analysis into emergency and rehabilitation programmes.

15. A number of entities have taken steps to incorporate gender perspectives into results-based planning and budgeting, with a view to facilitating monitoring and evaluation of gender-specific programme activities and establishing accountability. Within the Secretariat, attention to gender perspectives has been included in the instructions prepared by the Department of Management for programme budgets, beginning with the biennium 2000-2001. In the report of the Secretary-General on programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/59/69), the assessment of gender equality by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) was discussed. Out of 26 programmes, eight contained expected accomplishments referring to the gender dimension of their work in all their subprogrammes and nine programmes contained accomplishments in some of their subprogrammes. Of 133 subprogrammes, 39 per cent included an explicit reference to gender issues in at least one expected accomplishment. The programme budgets of the Department for Disarmament Affairs for the biennium 2004-2005 and 2006-2007, for example, include an expected accomplishment related to gender mainstreaming under each of its subprogrammes.

16. Several entities used other mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation, such as internal surveys, reviews, assessments, audits and annual reports. ILO, for example, has conducted 20 participatory gender audits of its programmes at headquarters and in the regions since 2001, and is now piloting gender audits for its constituents (Governments, employers' organizations and trade unions). A baseline survey carried out by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in 2003 indicated that 80 per cent of the Fund's country strategy and opportunities papers addressed gender issues, and 70 per cent of annual work plans and budgets for the Fund's projects allocated human and financial

resources for gender-related activities. The results-oriented annual reports of 2001 and 2002 indicated increased interventions by UNDP in promoting gender equality, both in terms of the number of countries reporting and the scope of activities. In 2004, UN-Habitat made gender impact assessment an integral part of project planning, management and evaluation, stipulating that all project proposals for funding should explain how women's and men's priorities will be addressed. Board members of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) monitor the incorporation of gender perspectives into the work of the Institute, thereby providing a strong incentive for research coordinators to raise gender issues in their respective areas.

17. Several entities noted that political will and accountability, in particular at the highest levels of an entity, are important for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session. Some entities emphasized the importance of integrating gender mainstreaming into job descriptions and work plans and introduced gender mainstreaming performance into staff appraisals. For example, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs developed guidance for humanitarian coordinators on their role and responsibilities in relation to gender mainstreaming in country level activities.

C. Programme and operational activities

18. Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, gender equality is increasingly being incorporated into programme and operational activities of the United Nations system. Progress, although uneven, has been made in the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern. Gender dimensions have been increasingly recognized in peace and security, humanitarian and reconstruction work as well as in relation to information and communication technologies (ICT), HIV/AIDS and trafficking.

19. A broad range of programme activities have been carried out by United Nations entities, at both the headquarters and field levels. Activities have included support to legislative change, policy development and planning and implementation of programmes. Entities have supported building of national capacity to integrate gender perspectives into national policies and programmes through training and provision of guidelines and handbooks, as well as technical assistance. Support has been provided to women's participation in policy and decision-making processes. Entities have supported government efforts aimed at awareness-raising, including mobilization of public opinion, through advocacy, gender-specific research, conferences, workshops, seminars, training, compilation and dissemination of sex disaggregated statistics and sharing and disseminating of information. Entities have also supported direct assistance to groups with special challenges.

20. Entities have made considerable efforts to incorporate gender perspectives in their programme support to Governments at the national level. For example, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), working with Governments, has established national mechanisms to monitor and reduce gender-based violence. UNDP assisted over 40 countries in starting up gender-sensitive budgeting initiatives. In Mongolia, UNDP promoted a national effort to review budgets, macroeconomic policies and poverty reduction strategy papers from a gender perspective. Gender specialist resources in a number of peacekeeping operations,

including the missions in Kosovo (the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo) and Afghanistan (the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan), have played an important role in providing technical inputs and facilitating the incorporation of gender perspectives in the drafting of new constitutions and legislation as well as the development of specific legislation on gender issues.

21. A number of entities have advocated gender equality and the advancement of women in a variety of ways. United Nations entities, including UNDP, UNFPA and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), have played an important role in advocating gender equality in the common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) processes as well as in work on the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction strategy papers, including through the establishment of gender theme groups. In February 2004, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) launched a new collaborative initiative: the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, with four specific goals: (a) to raise the visibility of issues related to women, girls and AIDS; (b) to catalyse action to address those issues; (c) to facilitate collaboration at all levels; and (d) to scale up action that will lead to concrete, measurable improvements in the lives of women and girls.[2] Within its initiative for the industrial rehabilitation and reconstruction of post-crisis countries, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) promoted women entrepreneurship development in such countries as Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and the Sudan.

22. UNAIDS, in collaboration with UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), carried out an initiative on gender-sensitive HIV prevention for young adolescents (10-14 years old), focusing specifically on the socialization process that has such an impact on the vulnerability of girls to HIV. OHCHR supported the development of legislation on women's rights, including on the elimination of discrimination, domestic violence, trafficking and political participation, and provided training to NGOs working on women's human rights. In its training activities in the area of peace and security, the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs addressed gender issues in peace support programmes and in conflict-sensitive development.

23. Several entities specifically advocated for women's participation in policy and decision-making processes. The Department for Disarmament Affairs developed a comprehensive database of female experts and women's organizations specialized in security and disarmament matters, with a view to increasing women's participation in conferences and other events. The Office of the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for Southern Lebanon highlighted the benefits of involving women in mine-awareness campaigns and encouraged their active participation. IMO provided access for women to specialized maritime training through the provision of fellowship funding in order to: integrate women into mainstream maritime activities; increase their employment in the sector; and increase the percentage of women at the senior management level.

24. The United Nations regional commissions played a critical role in supporting the efforts of Member States in the different regions. In particular, they have provided support to strengthen national machineries for the advancement of women.

For example, ESCWA encouraged Member States in the region to establish permanent national gender machineries and assisted Governments in formulating regional and national strategies, plans and programmes for the empowerment and advancement of women. To assist Member States in monitoring and evaluating progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Economic Commission for Africa developed a variety of tools, such as monitoring and evaluation tools for gender mainstreaming currently used by 18 countries in the region. The Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific organized a regional meeting of national machineries, in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Korea, which adopted a set of recommendations to guide countries in their follow-up actions. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean carried out a project on capacity-building of national machineries for governance. The regional commissions also organized regional preparatory conferences for the 10-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

25. Technical assistance programmes specifically targeting women and girls provided by the United Nations system covered a broad range of issues. Some of these activities were directed at the economic empowerment of women, while others specifically targeted women at risk. For example, IFAD supported women's microenterprise development and access to rural financial services. Community-based pre-school facilities set up by the United Nations Volunteers in Niger decreased burdens for women and girls and increased school attendance rates for girls as well as opportunities for women to engage in productive activities. UNIDO organized managerial and technical skills development programmes for women entrepreneurs engaged in food processing and textile sectors.

26. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) implemented programmes for women at risk in the context of the release of mercury and the threat of persistent organic pollutants. Through its Special Programme for Food Security, FAO implemented projects in 100 countries, providing assistance to war widows in Iraq in vegetable production, backyard poultry farming and the raising of small ruminants. In Viet Nam, the United Nations Volunteers promoted increased income-generating opportunities of disadvantaged youth, especially girls. The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute developed a programme on trafficking in minors and young women from Nigeria into Italy for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The programme, which was conceived as a "women for women" project, was carried out by local NGOs in Nigeria. In response to the marked increase in the number of women with cancer (cervical, breast and ovarian), the IAEA programme of action on cancer treatment aimed at early detection of the incidence of cancer in women as well as the provision of therapeutic strategies and awareness-raising activities.

27. Starting in 1995, UNFPA began to raise the issue of the harmful effects of female genital mutilation/cutting to the Sabiny Elder's Association and clan leaders in the Kapchorwa district of Uganda. In two years, the practice declined by 36 per cent. In Mali, Ecuador, Jamaica and Yemen, the United Nations Volunteers conducted workshops for women on their roles in utilization and protection of the environment. UNHCR advocated the representation and active participation of refugee and displaced women in peace processes in Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia.

28. United Nations entities provided: capacity-building activities, awareness raising and training workshops targeting a wide group of actors, including staff in ministries of finance and planning, statisticians, national accountants, policy analysts, national AIDS Councils, health-care providers and managers, peacekeepers, judiciary and law enforcement personnel, media, publishers, men's groups, men in the armed forces, academics, women's groups and networks and faith-based organizations. UNRWA created 64 women's programme centres that offered awareness-raising sessions in refugee camps on issues such as health, HIV/AIDS, poverty, environment and gender equality. The United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) provided women's organizations with advice and training and assisted them in establishing networks and forums for discussion and consensus building on gender policy for governmental institutions. UNFPA carried out workshops on sexual and reproductive health and gender equality for 15,000 men in the armed forces in Paraguay. IMO carried out sensitization seminars in partnership with several academic institutions, including the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, in order to enhance the visibility and impact of women in the maritime industry.

29. A large number of tools and methodologies were developed and used during the training. UNICEF supported the development of a manual on gender-sensitive learning materials for use by textbook publishers and writers in Indonesia. To facilitate integration of gender perspectives, UNFPA developed and piloted step-by-step guidelines for health-care providers and managers in health clinics on gender-based violence, including childhood sexual abuse, domestic violence, rape and sexual assault. The Economic Commission for Africa is developing a guidebook for integrating gender perspectives and household-level production into poverty reduction strategies in Africa, with a view to improving the skills of statisticians, national accountants and policy analysts in the collection, analysis and integration of data disaggregated by sex into national planning instruments. UNESCO prepared guidelines for the preparation of gender-responsive "Education for All" plans and distributed them widely in the Asia and the Pacific, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean regions. WHO developed manuals for health workers and educators to work with adolescent males through reflections on masculinity and gender relations on various health issues.

30. Several entities supported States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in their reporting and implementation obligations under the Convention. For example, the United Nations Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) provided technical assistance in the preparation and submission of its first report.

31. To raise awareness on gender equality among a wide range of development actors, United Nations entities conducted conferences, workshops and seminars for audiences ranging from high-level Government and United Nations officials to members of civil society, including women's organizations. Specific events were devoted to gender equality. UNEP organized a consultative seminar for women in 2004 that addressed emerging issues in the context of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. In 1998, UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNHCR and UNIFEM jointly organized an international consultation on women's land and property rights in conflicts and reconstruction in Kigali, Rwanda. UNESCO organized, in collaboration with the Tajik authorities, a conference on intercultural dialogue in Central Asia, which highlighted women's active role in building and nurturing

intercultural dialogue and peace in Central Asia. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) organized the second Conference on Women in Meteorology and Hydrology in March 2003.

32. Gender perspectives were also incorporated into other events. The Department for Disarmament Affairs integrated gender perspectives into conferences on illicit trade and small arms and light weapons, for example in a conference in Egypt in 2003, which devoted a significant segment to women and peace and security in a disarmament context. The Financing for Development Office of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs included a presentation on the impact of microfinance services on poor clients and gender equality in one of its multi-stakeholder consultations on the Monterrey Consensus in Mali in 2004.

33. National commitments to the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals and to tracking progress toward gender equality has increased the focus of United Nations entities on gender-sensitive data collection and analysis as well as gender-sensitive indicators. The Economic Commission for Europe assisted Member States in Central Asia in strengthening the capacity of their statistical offices and improving the dialogue between users and producers of data. The Economic Commission for Africa developed the African Gender and Development Index, which measures the gap between the status of women and men and assesses progress made by Governments in implementing their gender policies. UNICEF has taken the lead role in developing new indicators in the area of child protection, with a focus on preventing early marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting. UNRWA developed reporting forms that would facilitate the collection of sex-disaggregated data.

34. Entities developed comprehensive statistical databases with data disaggregated by sex, such as the databases developed by the World Bank for the Latin American and Caribbean region and by UNDP, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Europe, for the European region. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean developed an integrated system of gender indicators with access to 22 country profiles, for example on population, fertility, household and family, education, employment and income, poverty, health and political participation.[3]

35. The importance of building capacity for the collection, use and analysis of data disaggregated by sex was emphasized in several entities. FAO carried out training of national agricultural statisticians on the collection of data on the contribution of women and men to agricultural and rural development. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank, organized workshops to highlight the importance of social and gender statistics, in particular on monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals.

36. UNDP reported that support by entities to the collection and analysis of data at the country level has contributed to the development of more gender-sensitive common country assessments and UNDAFs; poverty reduction strategy papers, the reports on the Millennium Development Goals and national human development reports. In addition, the joint 2004 report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank on progress in implementation of the poverty reduction strategy papers revealed that data disaggregated by sex and social group had become more commonly used in monitoring the implementation of poverty reduction strategies, though there is a need to improve data quality. Further efforts are required to ensure

access to sex disaggregated statistics and indicators for areas such as poverty, energy, water, HIV/AIDS, ICT and economics.

37. Many entities have conducted research and prepared reports that specifically focus on women and girls and incorporate gender perspectives into mainstream documentation and research. The United Nations University prepared studies on women and children in post-conflict peacebuilding, trafficking in women and girls and women in natural resources management. It also made efforts to incorporate gender perspectives into research projects on inequality and social structures in economies in transition, and refugees and forced displacement.

38. An increasing body of gender-related research in various sector areas is available. In 2004, UNEP produced a publication entitled *Women and the Environment*, which demonstrated the value of involving women in environmental policy-making and provided detailed guidelines on gender mainstreaming in water management, preservation of biodiversity and combating desertification. On the basis of the International Crime Victim Survey, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute carried out comparative research on gender-based violence in more than 70 countries. The Economic Commission for Europe prepared country profiles on the housing sector, including an analysis of the impact of inadequate settlement conditions on women, in particular female headed households and single mothers. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean prepared a position document, "Roads towards Gender Equality", which examined the social and economic factors that impact on women's access to, use and control over productive resources and make it difficult for women to enter the labour market and earn income. The International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO conducted a survey on the role of Palestinian women in the floriculture industry (1998), which assessed the extent to which gender-specific factors determine how Palestinian women perceive and articulate their development needs and participate in development activities. The Office of Legal Affairs issued an appeal entitled "Multilateral Treaty Framework: An Invitation to Universal Participation, Rights of Women and Children".

39. WHO set up a Sexual Violence Research Initiative with the objective of building an experienced and committed network of researchers, policy makers, activists and others to ensure that sexual violence is addressed from a multidisciplinary and multicultural perspective.

40. ILO incorporated gender perspectives into the *World Employment Report*. Few other entities reported on having incorporated gender perspectives into high-profile reports. The magazine *Africa Renewal*, published by the Department of Public Information, included articles on the advancement of women in Africa.

41. The network of United Nations information centres played an important role at the regional and national levels in translating materials into local languages, promoting major United Nations publications on women and disseminating information to the media. It also provided crucial media and information assistance to the United Nations system during the annual observance of International Women's Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

42. The Department of Public Information raised awareness of gender equality and the empowerment of women through innovative print, online and broadcast

products. The interactive Cyberschoolbus web pages for International Women's Day enabled young men and women to showcase women and girls who have inspired them. Special television documentaries, produced for young audiences by the United Nations Works Programme, drew attention to the plight of young indigenous women and women victims of landmines. The Department also incorporated gender perspectives in press material and messages for major conferences and summits, such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the International Year of Fresh Water, the World Summit on the Information Society, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the annual sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

43. A large number of entities used media campaigns and ICT to promote gender equality and the advancement of women. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia used media campaigns to raise gender awareness and improve the image of women in society. The Integrated Regional Information Network, an independent humanitarian news service operated under the aegis of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which covers 46 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and eight countries in central Asia, regularly carried stories on women and issues from a gender perspective.[4] The field offices of OHCHR used radio and television to raise awareness about women's rights, including violence against women. The Division for Public Administration and Development Management developed a peacebuilding portal, an online interactive web site containing 200 profiles of organizations working primarily on women and gender in peacebuilding in sub-Saharan Africa. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) launched a new web page in October 2003 to draw attention to gender and intellectual property activities.

44. A number of trust funds have been established within United Nations entities to support activities aiming at gender equality. For example, the Trust Fund for Gender Mainstreaming in the World Bank, with grants from the Governments of Norway and the Netherlands, supported many innovative activities, including providing for the different needs of men and women in the post-conflict reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and targeting high-risk male groups in the HIV/AIDS prevention project in Senegal, the Gambia and Burkina Faso. In 2003, ILO launched the Gender Equality Partnership Fund specifically to assist constituents in over 25 countries in the implementation of ILO's shared policy objective on gender equality.

45. The IMF reported that in its policy advice it had sought to improve the quality of public expenditures by shifting resources away from excessive military expenditure, as requested by the Platform for Action, towards public spending on infrastructure, basic education and health care. In implementing the Highly Indebted Poor Country initiative, IMF and the World Bank assisted countries in developing targets, including primary school enrolment rates for girls, in order to bring about irrevocable disbursement of debt relief.

46. A number of entities promoted gender mainstreaming in intergovernmental processes. The Development Policy and Planning Office of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which services the Committee for Development Policy, reported that it provided the Committee with analytical documents that incorporated gender perspectives and made use of data disaggregated by sex. The report of the Secretary-General on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-

up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/59/214) emphasized a quantitative increase in the references to women and gender equality in reports submitted to the various committees of the General Assembly, while noting there was still limited qualitative attention to gender perspectives. Many reports made only cursory reference to gender equality, and few reports contained solid gender analysis or recommendations on further action.

47. At the launch of the International Year of Microcredit 2005 in November 2004, the Office of the High Representatives for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island States and IFAD collaboratively organized a round table on "Empowering Women through Microcredit". During the eleventh session of UNCTAD in June 2004, the Conference organized a high-level round table on trade and gender.

D. Entities specialized in the promotion of gender equality

48. Catalytic support in the implementation of the Platform for Action has been provided directly both to Member States and to the efforts of United Nations entities by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNIFEM and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). This has included advocacy, advice and support, in particular on gender mainstreaming research, the provision of resources and development of pilot activities.

49. The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, in collaboration with other United Nations entities, has promoted, facilitated and monitored gender mainstreaming throughout the United Nations system. The Special Adviser provided briefings and advice to senior management throughout the system to promote a greater understanding of gender mainstreaming and contribute to the development of capacity-building efforts, methodologies and tools. Briefing notes on gender mainstreaming in sector areas were prepared in collaboration with other entities. In collaboration with the Office on Drugs and Crime and the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Special Adviser prepared briefing notes on drugs and drug control and crime and crime prevention. The Office played a catalytic role in the area of women and peace and security and provided routine briefings and materials on gender mainstreaming to Special Representatives of the Secretary-General heading peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions.

50. The Division for the Advancement of Women worked closely with Governments, its partners in the United Nations system and civil society in supporting the implementation of the Platform for Action, including through the gender mainstreaming strategy. To support the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women organized expert group meetings to gather knowledge on emerging issues and trends on the themes of the multi-year programme of work of the Commission. As part of its technical cooperation programme, the Division provided capacity-building exercises on negotiation and mediation skills to 70 African women leaders to support their integration into formal peace negotiations. In collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and the Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination of the

Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Division organized workshops on strengthening the capacity of national machineries through effective use of ICT in Namibia and Senegal. In order to strengthen capacity of Governments and other actors in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Division organized regional training workshops and colloquiums in Vienna (1999), Bangkok (2002), Arusha (2003) and Nassau, the Bahamas (2004).

51. UNIFEM provided financial and technical assistance to programmes on women's human rights, political participation and economic security: contributing to the creation of a national statistical system in Mexico that monitors the implementation of national programmes for equal opportunities and the advancement of women; producing two editions of the *Progress of the World's Women* (2000 and 2002), and addressing the issue of women, war and peace and the gender dimensions of the Millennium Development Goals. To increase access to information on women and peace and security, UNIFEM created a web portal (WomenWarPeace.org), which acts as a centralized repository of information from a wide variety of sources, with links to reports and data from the United Nations system, academics, NGOs and media sources. The aim of portal is to track progress on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and to encourage researchers, policy makers, analysts and NGOs to routinely include, seek and contribute information and analysis on women, war and peace.

52. INSTRAW has promoted gender equality and women's advancement worldwide through research, training and the collection and dissemination of information, producing a paper on gender in conflict and conflict prevention that provides a framework for analysis of gender perspectives on peace and security. It has also provided information resources on gender aspects of conflict and peace on its web site. On the occasion of the Second World Assembly on Ageing and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, INSTRAW compiled special collections of documents, set up web-based discussions and prepared discussion papers summarizing major policy questions, emerging issues and research needs. A collaborative research project on gender and ICT provided policy recommendations for bridging the gender digital divide to serve as input to the World Summit on the Information Society.

E. Inter-agency collaboration

53. Inter-agency collaboration on gender equality at the national, regional and global levels has continued and intensified since the Fourth World Conference on Women. The adoption of the Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming provided new impetus and shifted the emphasis of inter-agency activities to gender mainstreaming.

54. The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, which has 60 members, promotes collaboration, coordination and the regular exchange of information on gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system. It focuses on strengthening capacities for gender mainstreaming within the entities of the United Nations system and promotes coherence in gender mainstreaming approaches and methodologies. The Network also provides support to intergovernmental processes,

in particular major United Nations global conferences and summits. The Network is chaired by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

55. Activities of the Network are carried out through task forces on specific themes, such as gender mainstreaming in relation to the Millennium Development Goals; ICT; peace and security; the common country assessments/UNDAFs; trade; water; and monitoring, evaluation and performance reporting. For example, at the occasion of the eleventh session of UNCTAD in June 2004, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender and Trade launched a publication entitled *Trade and Gender — Opportunities and Challenges for Developing Countries* in order to sensitize policy makers on the gender implications of trade. The Network held workshops to enhance competencies on gender mainstreaming during its annual meetings, including methodologies (2001); training and capacity-building (2002); global conferences (2003); and reporting and monitoring (2004).

56. The regional commissions played an important role in facilitating inter-agency collaboration at the regional level. For example, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific chairs the Thematic Working Group on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, which also includes membership of local regional non-governmental and civil society organizations. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean organizes an annual inter-agency meeting to coordinate work in the region.

57. Inter-agency collaboration has also been crucial in promoting gender equality and women's rights at the country level. Gender theme groups played an important role in some countries[5] in pooling resources, facilitating dialogue, developing common strategies and action plans, advocating and sensitizing policy makers, government officials and United Nations staff as well as in supporting the efforts of Governments.

III. Obstacles and challenges

58. United Nations entities have raised a number of obstacles and challenges to the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session.

59. Several entities identified the provision of effective training for staff at different levels in their organizations as a challenge. Obstacles included high turnover of staff, limited financial and human resources, as well as skepticism with regard to gender issues and lack of incentive to participate in training. WFP attempted to overcome this challenge by incorporating gender perspectives into corporate training programmes. To ensure capacity of all staff, UNDP made a gender training module mandatory for all staff.

60. Promoting the integration of gender analysis in programme design, planning and implementation was identified as another challenge. UN-Habitat addressed this issue by administrating a self-assessment questionnaire to establish how staff deal with gender issues in their daily work and to identify skills gaps. The World Bank emphasized that further capacity-building efforts were required in areas such as economic policy, rural development, social protection and infrastructure.

61. Underdeveloped reporting, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms continued to be an obstacle in most United Nations entities. Challenges included the lack of

access to and use of sex-disaggregated data as well as gender specific information and indicators. FAO raised the need for monitoring and evaluation methods that combine traditional quantitative measures with qualitative indicators.

62. Lack of data disaggregated by sex as well as limited inclusion of existing data into mainstream statistical analysis has created a major challenge to implementation. The Economic Commission for Africa emphasized that data disaggregated by sex was particularly important in order to demonstrate the centrality of gender equality in national development strategies and to remove persistent misunderstandings and resistance to gender mainstreaming. ILO highlighted the need for better data and indicators on gender income gaps, decision-making and the informal economy.

63. Lack of accountability remains one of the major challenges to effective implementation. Few mechanisms exist within the United Nations system to ensure accountability.

64. Several entities emphasized that lack of financial resources remained a major constraint. Entities emphasized the gap between their programmes of work and the resources allocated to the regular budget. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) expressed its concern about lack of funding for gender sensitive activities and gender mainstreaming. Some entities, including those that relied entirely on extrabudgetary funding for their gender mainstreaming activities, highlighted the challenges in terms of long-term programming of activities and the need to establish predictable financial mechanisms. ILO called for extended gender budget lines for integrating gender perspectives into all mainstream projects and programmes.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

65. United Nations entities have made substantial progress in their efforts to support implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session. Most entities have developed gender policies and strategies and made institutional arrangements to facilitate implementation. Gender specialist resources, although limited in number and capacity, are in place in most entities of the United Nations system to promote and support implementation. Staff awareness raising has been carried out in the majority of organizations. Tools and methodologies have been developed and put into use. Despite these achievements, challenges remain in the implementation, including insufficient awareness and capacity of staff, underdeveloped monitoring and evaluation of activities, poor accountability, lack of data disaggregated by sex and inadequate resource allocation.

66. The Commission on the Status of Women may wish to encourage United Nations entities, within their mandates, to take the following actions:

(a) Continue to support Governments, as well as civil society, in their efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and outcome of the special session;

(b) Strengthen gender-equality policy frameworks and further develop strategies and action plans with measurable goals and targets with time frames and indicators for monitoring and evaluation;

(c) Increase management commitment and establish mechanisms that hold staff and senior managers accountable for results, through incentives, rewards and sanctions, including in the performance appraisal system;

(d) Make gender training mandatory for all staff, ensure continuous learning about gender issues, including by integrating gender perspectives into mainstream corporate training programmes, and assess the impact of existing training programmes to improve their effectiveness;

(e) Build the capacity of staff to undertake gender analysis and require all staff to systematically utilize gender analysis in policy formulation as well as programmatic work;

(f) Increase attention to gender perspectives in medium-term plans and programme budgets and ensure sufficient attention to gender equality perspectives in planning and allocation of financial resources;

(g) Require reporting on progress made and challenges encountered in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action as an integrated part of existing monitoring and evaluation processes and carry out specific assessments as required;

(h) Increase exchange of experiences, good practices and lessons learned among entities of the United Nations system, as well as with Governments and civil society;

(i) Integrate gender perspectives into all reports before intergovernmental bodies, including the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions and the Security Council;

(j) Ensure systematic attention to gender perspectives in critical areas, such as macroeconomics, international trade and investment, transport, taxation and finance.

67. The Commission on the Status of Women may also wish to recommend the following action with regard to inter-agency coordination mechanisms:

(a) The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality should continue its work in policy development, capacity-building, the development of methodologies and tools, the exchange of good practices, the development of effective monitoring and evaluation processes and the provision of practical support to its members in gender mainstreaming and report annually to the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination;

(b) All inter-agency mechanisms should give attention to gender perspectives in their work.

Notes

[1] Other examples activities within United Nations entities are contained in previous reports of the Secretary-General to the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/1997/2, E/CN.6/1998/2, E/CN.6/1999/2, E/CN.6/2000/2, E/CN.6/2001/2, E/CN.6/2002/2, E/CN.6/2003/2, E/CN.6/2004/3), the Economic and Social Council (E/1997/66, E/1998/53, E/1999/54, E/2000/77, E/2001/78 and E/2004/59) and the General Assembly (A/51/322, A/52/281, A/53/308, A/54/264, A/55/293 and A/56/319).

[2] Collaborative partners include: the Center for Women's Global Leadership, FAO, the Global Campaign for Education, the Global Campaign for Microbicides, HelpAge, the International Center for Research on Women, the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, the International Partnership for Microbicides, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).

[3] http://www.eclac.org/mujer.

[4] http://www.irinnews.org.

[5] As of May 2003, there were 86 gender theme groups in 78 of 135 UNDP country offices, an increase over 58 in 1998.

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Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between October 2003 and September 2004, in reference to Economic and Social Council resolution 2004/56 of 23 July 2004. It reviews the unfolding humanitarian and socio-economic crisis in the situation of women and provides an overview of the assistance provided to Palestinian women by entities of the United Nations system, in particular with regard to economic activities, humanitarian assistance, education and training, health, the human rights of women, and the media and advocacy. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2004/56 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council, concerned about the grave deterioration of the situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report, which covers the period from October 2003 September 2004, reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations bodies or individuals that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such bodies and individuals include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967. The reports of those bodies and individuals made occasional references to the situation of women but did not provide in-depth analysis of the specific situation of women within the overall population during the reporting period. The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, its causes and consequences visited the Occupied Palestinian Territory in June 2004. However, the report on that visit was not available at the time the present report was prepared (see para. 38 below).

3. The report further reflects information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), the Department of Public Information, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Bank. In response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2004/56, the report also draws on information contained in the report prepared by ESCWA on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/59/89).

4. The first part of the report provides a review of the second intifada (from 29 September 2000) and its specific impact on the situation of Palestinian women, as well as the political and socio-economic circumstances of the Palestinian community in general. The second part of the report provides information on how the United Nations system has continued to assist Palestinian women.

5. Taking into account that women tend to suffer disproportionately during times of political unrest and instability, the report stresses the need to mainstream gender perspectives in policies and programmes to ensure that the concerns and needs of both women and men are addressed.

II. Situation of Palestinian women

6. In the period under review, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People expressed grave concern over the devastating effects of the occupation on the lives of the most vulnerable members of Palestinian society, women and children.[1] The Committee noted that the hardship of daily life was felt most acutely by Palestinian women who carried the burden of responsibility within the household because of the death, imprisonment or unemployment of male members.[2] UNSCO reported that women also assumed the additional burden of responsibility as caregivers to the injured in the absence of adequate institutional services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

7. It also reported that Palestinian women were among those who had died since the onset of the crisis. Between September 2000 and September 2004, more than 3,500 Palestinians had died, including approximately 650 children under the age of 18 and 250 women.

8. Over the past four years, the number of women detainees in prison increased. According to UNSCO, prior to the outbreak of the crisis, there were three Palestinian women prisoners. Since then, an additional 300 women have been arrested, of whom 103 remained in prison in September 2004. Furthermore, the death, imprisonment and unemployment of adult male members of the community increased poverty and social burdens that contributed to increased domestic violence and stress (A/59/89-E/2004/21, para. 58).

9. According to UNRWA, the social, economic and cultural context of women's health remained challenging during the period under review owing to the high birth rate of Palestine refugee women. In particular, malnutrition continued to have a major impact on the lives of Palestinian women and children. WHO reported that during a home visit programme conducted by the Ministry of Health, 69.7 per cent of 1,768 expectant women, within one month of delivery, were found to be anaemic. UNRWA indicated that in 2003 the anaemia rate of nursing mothers accessing its services was 15.3 per cent, and that the anaemia rate of pregnant women was 38.3 per cent. UNSCO reported that the nutritional health status of women and children was also affected by the internal closures. In particular, the closure policy impacted greatly on food security, which led to a decline in both the quantity and the quality of food of 73 per cent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip populations, with four out of 10 households identified as chronically insecure by FAO.

10. Human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to destroy the fabric of Palestinian society (A/59/256, para. 6), including the rights to freedom of movement, to choose a residence, to an adequate standard of living including adequate food, clothing and housing, to education, to health and to life, all of which continued to drastically decline (A/59/381, paras. 30-86). Land confiscation and the destruction of cultivated fields and houses reached unprecedented levels. Families and communities were divided, farmers were denied access to their land, workers to their jobs, children and youth to schools, colleges

and universities and women and children to basic health and social services (A/59/381, para. 30). With the continued demolition of houses and destruction of property, damage to public structures and properties reached an estimated US$ 1.2 billion.[3] In addition, Palestinian women in prison were reported to have been subjected to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment (A/59/256, para. 6).

11. Restrictions on the movement of goods and persons continued to exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by increasing unemployment and poverty, preventing health care and interrupting education (A/59/89-E/2004/21, para. 14). The ILO noted that mobility restrictions entailed different consequences for men and women. Regarding access to education, restrictions affect female teachers and pupils more than their male counterparts, owing to the difficulties and dangers they face travelling to and from schools. Fearing for their safety, parents may keep daughters from attending classes. Female teachers are more likely to stop going to work when they have to walk long distances in isolated areas to avoid checkpoints and settlers.[4]

12. UNFPA reported that access issues continued to be an important barrier to women's utilization of appropriate reproductive health care, including family planning and obstetric care. Soldiers at checkpoints prevented ambulances and individuals on their way to health-care facilities from reaching the nearest hospital (A/59/381, para. 79). UNSCO noted that medical personnel were unable to reach their place of work regularly and that distribution of medical supplies to rural areas was difficult. Delays have resulted in women delivering their babies while waiting to pass, which has led to maternal and infant deaths.[5]

13. The severe economic depression of the Palestinian economy since September 2000 continued unabated during the reporting period.[6] Reality of life in the occupied territories is one of economic strangulation, with consequent far-reaching social impacts.[7] The mild economic recovery reported in 2003 was short-lived, with trade flows remaining below pre-intifada levels.[8] The World Bank reported that Palestinian business owners and managers continued to report difficulties arising from internal closures that hampered their ability to receive necessary inputs and to market goods. The Bank indicated that in 2004 domestic employment had recovered to the extent that the number of Palestinians employed in the West Bank and Gaza surpassed pre-intifada levels. However, it was reported that the number of unemployed had increased, from 73,000 in the third quarter preceding the intifada in 2000, to 198,000 currently.[9] Low levels of employment resulted in high levels of poverty among Palestinians, particularly women. According to the World Bank, by mid-2004, 47 per cent of Palestinians lived in poverty, on less than $2.10 per day. Female-headed households display an incidence of poverty 1.3 times higher than households headed by men.[10] Community and family disapproval of women's work in the absence of male breadwinners are major obstacles to women seeking wage employment.[11]

14. In spite of high-level educational attainment, women remained marginalized in the labour market. The International Labour Organization reports that the generally positive correlation between female education and labour force participation was not applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Women's labour force participation remains low, in spite of their high and successful secondary school enrolment. That observation was attributed to the high fertility rate among Palestinian women, relatively early marriage and large families. Those factors, coupled with the large

numbers of male Palestinian prisoners, the high number of persons killed in conflict and the destruction of homes, placed increased pressure on the care economy, and specifically on women, the primary providers of care.[12]

15. In cases where women participate in the labour market, they are mostly located in the agriculture and service sectors. Women are deeply affected by movement restrictions and closures, which affect agricultural production.[13] The ILO observed that, by comparison with men, women are disadvantaged in terms of wages and social security benefits, and that there are unequal barriers for women entrepreneurs in terms of property and inheritance rights, access to credit, penal liability and the availability of childcare facilities. Households resorted to a variety of strategies to cope with the sharp fall in income, including reducing expenditure and consumption, postponing payment of bills, applying for credit, seeking family support, engaging in subsistence activities and other measures.[14] The ILO also found that coping strategies of households tend to fall disproportionately on women and to restrict women's options.[15]

16. UNSCO carried out field research in 30 West Bank rural communities in 2004 and found that women attempted to substitute for the loss of male income, even if that entailed travel and overnight stay outside the community. In addition, field research revealed that, although some women found work in textile workshops, the majority worked inside the community as unpaid family agricultural labourers. It was also found that women's entry into the labour force did not result in economic development, but, instead, added to existing domestic and childcare burdens.

17. According to UNICEF, there are significant gaps in the female literacy rate — only 87.4 per cent — compared with a 96.3 per cent male literacy rate. UNICEF reported that the gaps are most prominent among the older population. School enrolment rates at the basic, secondary school and post-secondary levels grew during the past decade and are roughly the same for boys and girls. Furthermore, enrolment was slightly higher for girls than boys at the first two levels. UNICEF also reported that a substantial number of males and females aged 10-24 years do not continue to secondary education. The main reason for boys and young men dropping out was attributed to lack of interest in education, which could be an indication that starting work is a higher priority for men and boys. On the other hand, the figures for girls show that nearly half (46.5 per cent) drop out because of marriage.[16]

18. Efforts were made to address discrimination against women and the concerns of Palestinian women through the newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs. Previously a sub-unit of the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Women's Affairs was mandated to reinforce the gender mainstreaming strategy that previously had been the major responsibility of focal points in various ministries. According to UNDP, a number of objectives have been identified to address the low participation of women in the labour force (only 11 per cent of women of employment age participate in the labour force) owing to low salaries, compared to those of men, and poverty among female-headed households. The objectives include upgrading governmental political commitment to include gender, democracy and human rights issues in the policies and plans of the various ministries and relevant legislation and regulations; linking lobbying and advocacy activities with the development of policies and laws; and building a network of links with women governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations and human rights organizations at

the regional and international levels, and exchanging experience with them on the implementation and support of international conventions on women and human rights, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

III. Assistance to Palestinian women

Economic activities

19. The World Bank reported on a number of projects aimed at improving the situation of Palestinian people, including women. The 2005 higher education project aims at strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and at providing support to higher education institutions to improve the management, quality and relevance of programmes. The objectives of the $80-million social safety net reform project are to protect and enhance the human capital of children in the poorest households and to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Social Affairs to assist in the implementation of the special hardship case programmes. Under an improved targeting scheme, poor adult women living on their own because of separation, divorce or widowhood will receive cash assistance from the special hardship case programmes. Children suffering from malnutrition and women of childbearing age benefit from the second emergency services support project, which is supported by a Trust Fund grant and co-financed by five other donors in the amount of $40 million.

20. The World Bank also implemented the second Palestinian NGO project. A main selection criteria for receiving emergency grants is the project's ability to reach women as direct beneficiaries. Under the project, a counselling centre for women in difficult circumstances was designed with the objectives of providing support, therapy, advocacy and vocational training services to Palestinian women subject to domestic violence, and to build institutional capacity aimed at reducing the incidence of violence against Palestinian girls and women. The project is financed by the Government of Italy through the World Bank. The Gaza industrial estate project development objectives are to increase direct and indirect employment in Gaza and to contribute to the gross domestic product of Gaza by creating conditions conducive to private sector industrial investment, including appropriate physical infrastructure. The project has a well developed management information system and includes a breakdown of workers by sex, which is monitored and updated on a monthly basis. Although employment figures under the project are currently below expectations owing to the crisis, on average there are about 100 women employed by tenant firms representing approximately 18 per cent of total employment.

21. The ILO established a Palestinian fund for employment and social protection. The fund provides a strategic framework for mobilizing resources to improve the social conditions of the Palestinian people, who are suffering from both occupation and diminishing welfare. It also serves as a tool for the consolidation of all activities undertaken to generate employment and provide social protection, ranging from technical advice and capacity-building to direct financial assistance. The fund is expected to integrate a significant gender component and to apply a gender mainstreaming approach. In selecting projects, consideration will be given to activities that support the employment and social protection needs of Palestinian

women and men workers. Project proposals will be evaluated to ensure attention to gender equality concerns.

22. UNDP initiated a number of projects aimed at women's economic empowerment. As part of its Emergency Response Division, the UNDP programme of assistance to the Palestinian people continued to work with the Ministry of Agriculture to execute a poverty alleviation project targeting female-headed rural households. The project aims at achieving sustainable food security and creating a source of income for rural women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip through investing in livestock. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 42 small agricultural income-generating projects for female-headed households have been established. Another project provides emergency support to existing small-income generation projects run by female-headed households. The project aims at providing financial and technical support to 30 small women-run projects that were affected as a result of the ongoing political crisis. As a result of economic stagnation and the high unemployment rate of male breadwinners, the small and unsustainable projects run by those women are the only means for income generation for the households. Support to those small projects aims to increase their sustainability and potential for generating income for the households.

23. UNRWA reported granting 4,498 loans valued at $2.47 million to women through its microfinance and microenterprise programme. The microcredit community support programme also issued more than $880,000 in loans to both low-income families and entrepreneurs, including women.

Humanitarian assistance

24. As follow-up to an FAO/WFP food security and nutrition assessment undertaken across all districts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2003, FAO reported working on the establishment of a multisectoral integrated food insecurity and vulnerability information system. The objective is to facilitate stakeholders' access to comprehensive, up-to-date and user-friendly information on food security, nutrition and vulnerability. Institutional mechanisms and capacity for the collection, analysis and use of food security- and nutrition-related information disaggregated by sex will also be strengthened. The sex-disaggregated information will provide a basis for decision makers in the design, targeting and implementation of policies, strategies and interventions designed to protect and promote food security and improve the nutritional status of the entire population — men and women, boys and girls — throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

25. UNIFEM opened a programme office in Jerusalem in April 2004 under the auspices of the UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People. UNIFEM is actively involved in local United Nations coordination efforts, including the Consolidated Appeals Process for humanitarian aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the United Nations inter-agency humanitarian advocacy group.

26. UNRWA continued to assist Palestine refugee women through its special hardship case programme. UNRWA reported that of the special hardship case families, 46 per cent were families headed by women. Under that programme, families are provided with a critical safety net in the form of food support and selective cash assistance. Community services are provided for women through 64 women's programme centres, which include occupational training programmes,

kindergartens and nurseries. Over 90,000 refugees, mainly women and children, have benefited from those services.

27. WFP coordinated with local non-governmental organizations to implement the Supplementary Feeding Programme for 5,000 children and their families, which included two free medical days for mothers and children under the age of 12. A total of 217 women and children attended the free medical service.

Education and training

28. The UNICEF response in the education sector focused on ensuring that as many children as possible had the opportunity to continue learning, even if they cannot reach their schools. UNICEF supported alternative projects for children in areas experiencing strict closures, as well as initiatives to keep children in school, such as the "back to school" campaign, to ensure that a million Palestinian children could attend school by September 2003 and remain in school throughout the school year. UNICEF also supported the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in integrating basic life skills into the curricula of grades 4 and 9; the curricula of grades 5 and 10 were to be covered during 2004. Training in effective screening and treatment of psychosocial distress was provided to school counsellors, kindergarten teachers and social workers to assist them in supporting Palestinian women and children affected by ongoing violence. UNICEF has made concerted efforts to mainstream gender perspectives into all UNICEF programme communication. During 2003/04, specific programme communication materials targeting the girl child and women were developed, including on iron deficiency, anaemia and the importance of breastfeeding, a life-skills training manual, remedial education worksheets and anti-smoking campaigns for young people.

29. The ILO reported that three Palestinian women participated in a national training workshop organized by the ILO Regional Office for Arab States on the theme "Vocational training methods and training curricula for people with disabilities", held in Amman in 2004 for 10 Palestinian rehabilitation workers. In 2004, a new training programme on the theme "Promotion of social dialogue: strengthening national social dialogue mechanisms" was initiated. The programme is aimed at fully involving women national machineries in all activities. The first course was held from 13 to 19 June 2004, with 15 Palestinian participants from the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and the Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture. A Palestinian woman from a trade union participated in the course. A Palestinian woman representative from the newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs of the Palestinian Authority also attended as an observer.

30. With the cooperation of the Centre for Arab Women Training and Research, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) organized a meeting of 16 representatives of key Palestinian women NGOs and institutions in Tunis in February 2004. The meeting aimed at identifying the strategic needs of Palestinian women in the social and human sciences, and to develop a plan by which UNESCO could contribute to meeting those needs. Outcomes of the Tunis meeting were a project proposal for the establishment of a specialized independent Palestinian women's resource centre, which was prepared and submitted for consideration, as well as funding to various stakeholders. The objective of the centre would be to contribute to the development of research-based

policies that promote gender equality and the human rights of Palestinian women by serving as a monitoring centre and clearing house on information related to women's issues in Palestine. It would, inter alia, conduct, collect and house research and documentation produced on the status and the condition of Palestinian women; analyse and disseminate information to policy makers and relevant partners; and facilitate training, networking and empowerment of women's organizations.

31. Taking into account the link between women's and girls' education and women's empowerment, UNDP supported the construction of a large number of girls' schools in rural communities where tradition does not allow girls to travel to a distant school, as well as the expansion of schools to allow increased enrolment of girls. Approximately seven schools for girls were constructed, expanded or rehabilitated with sanitary facilities. Assistance was also provided for the development of gender-sensitive educational curricula and teaching modules and for teacher training in their use. The objective is to foster appropriate gender perspectives among both boys and girls. A training manual on gender issues was developed and widely distributed to schools throughout the West Bank and Gaza.

32. To address the lack of education and skills of some women, WFP supported literacy-, health- and nutrition-skills training. Advanced specialized courses on the environment, farming, animal husbandry and other income-generating activities, such as handicrafts, home gardening and food processing, were provided.

33. In collaboration with UNIFEM, the UNRWA Department of Education continued to assist Palestine refugee women acquire modern technological skills through a gender project. The project stresses equal access to information and communication technologies by Palestine refugee women and men, encourages gender equality in recruitment and retention policies, builds capacity to produce relevant information content for Palestine refugee women and helps them fulfil their socio-economic, reproductive and community participation roles.

Health

34. UNFPA continued its emergency obstetric care programme. In particular, training was provided to health-care providers at the community level. For the period under review, UNFPA trained 168 physicians, nurses and midwives in community emergency obstetric care, bringing the total number to 268 providers since the inception of the emergency programme. In addition, 85 health-care providers were trained in how to deal with traumatized women. A mapping exercise of primary health-care facilities with reproductive health services was carried out and completed in October 2003. The exercise was completed in partnership with the largest service providers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory from Government, non-governmental organizations and UNRWA facilities. It was the first of its kind and will be key to improving service delivery in the area of reproductive health, especially for women.

35. As part of its regular programme activities, UNFPA also collaborated with a national NGO in producing a manual on psychosocial and legal counselling in reproductive health. The manual covers a number of difficult areas of reproductive health and rights, including rape, incest, domestic violence and psychological abuse. It also provides a legal guideline and framework for providers in dealing with women and their families, in order to promote empowerment and rehabilitation. It is the first of its kind in the Arab region and was produced in Arabic.

36. WHO addressed the issue of mental health in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially among women, who are greatly affected by the social stigma of mental illness. Women also continued to bear major responsibility for caring for family members while coping with their own ill health. As part of the implementation of the new mental health policy, three community mental health centres were opened and an anti-stigma campaign was launched to address the general public. The majority of psychologists and social workers working in the mental health system are women.

37. UNRWA continued to provide maternal and child health-care and family planning services as an integral part of its primary health-care services to Palestine refugee women. UNRWA supported full immunization coverage for women and children against vaccine-preventable diseases; iron supplementation for women throughout pregnancy and post delivery; and health education programmes aimed at preventing HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. UNRWA sought to make its health programmes more gender-sensitive by obtaining, whenever possible, data disaggregated by sex, with the objective of reducing gender disparities in health care and health-care services.

Women's human rights, including the implications of violence against women

38. The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, its causes and consequences visited the Occupied Palestinian Territory on official mission from 13 to 18 June 2004. The purpose of the mission was to address the impact of the conflict and occupation on women, in particular the implications of violence against women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Special Rapporteur met with a number of Government officials, including the Minister of Women's Affairs and representatives of women's organizations. The conclusions of the Special Rapporteur will be presented to the Commission on Human Rights at its sixty-first session, in 2005.

39. In August 2004, the OHCHR Palestine office contributed to a workshop held in Ramallah for 15 high-ranking women from various Palestinian ministries, in cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs. The workshop covered many issues, including international human rights mechanisms, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and women's rights.

40. OHCHR organized, under the component "Human rights education/awareness-building", a one-day seminar focusing on Palestinian women working in the development field, on the theme "Development and human rights". The seminar, held on 3 August 2004, in cooperation with the women's affairs centre located in the Gaza Strip, particularly addressed women working in the development field. Of the 24 trainees who participated in the seminar, 18 were women. The course aimed at strengthening the capacity of women working in the field of human rights and at providing them with the basic human rights instruments as tools to be used in their daily work. The seminar also succeeded in making linkages between development, human rights and the rights-based approach.

Advocacy and media

41. The Division for Palestinian Rights, Department of Political Affairs, continued in 2004 to work closely with civil society through international meetings and conferences, including to bring attention to the situation of Palestinian women. The

civil society declaration, adopted by the United Nations Forum of Civil Society in Support of Middle East Peace in Cape Town, South Africa, in July 2004, acknowledged that Palestinian women bear the harshest burden of the occupation, and called on women's organizations in Africa to express solidarity with Palestinian women. The plan of action adopted at the United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People, held at United Nations Headquarters in September 2004, specifically called for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) mandating the full participation of women in all international peace and justice efforts regarding Palestinian rights. The Division also continued to include information on the situation of Palestinian women in its monthly monitoring publication *Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine* and a monthly bulletin, as well as in its documents collection in the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), under the subject category "Women". A special web address has been created permitting external web sites to link on an ongoing basis to the UNISPAL subject category on Palestinian women.

42. The Department of Public Information continued its annual international media seminars on peace in the Middle East, bringing together current and former policy makers from the region as well as senior officials, international experts and representatives of the world media. Several Palestinian women journalists participated in the seminar. The revised and updated Department of Public Information publication, issued in the six official languages of the United Nations, was widely disseminated to all United Nations field offices. Chapter 9 of the booklet addresses various issues concerning Palestinian women, including social and economic progress. On the United Nations web site, the News Centre has covered a wide range of developments related to the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and its impact on Palestinian women.

43. United Nations radio reported extensively on issues related to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women. The vital role of women as peacemakers and builders of society in many regions of the world, including the Palestinian Occupied Territory, was highlighted as one of "Ten stories the world should hear more about", a new project launched by the Department in May 2004. The issue of Palestinian women is also addressed on the programme "Women" produced by United Nations Radio. From 10 November to 19 December 2003, the Department organized a training programme for a group of six Palestinian broadcasters and journalists, including four women, to strengthen their professional capacity as information media personnel. The United Nations Information Service at Geneva also promoted the question of Palestine, for example, by issuing a press release on 24 June 2004, in English and French, on the visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

Institutional arrangements

44. In June 2004, UNDP entered into an agreement with the newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs of the Palestinian Authority to support the development of a three-year action plan aimed at promoting gender-sensitive structures, programmes and policies. The plan will be carried out in consultation with women's groups, NGOs, ministries and experts. UNDP, in coordination with UNIFEM, assisted the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Palestine with the drafting of

an interim work plan and strategic vision. In efforts to promote gender equality, including within the context of the Millennium Development Goals, the UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People has committed to providing the necessary human resource base to ensure the smooth operation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. As a follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, support was also provided for the establishment of women's units within ministries of the Palestinian Authority to advocate for gender-sensitive policies and promote the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee for the advancement of women.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

45. In the reporting period, the ongoing conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had a significant negative effect on Palestinian women. Women were among those killed or wounded and/or who lost their spouses, children or family members. Furthermore, the declining economic conditions, caused by restrictions on movement, perpetuated massive unemployment, an increase in poverty and lack of access to health care, health-care services and education. Restriction of movement has also resulted in the death of pregnant women and infants. Furthermore, pressures of the ongoing conflict have led to increased domestic violence and psychological stress among women and children. In view of that increase, it is imperative that the newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs, in collaboration with NGOs, focus on the root causes and consequences of domestic violence in order to identify appropriate measures to combat the problem.

46. The organizations of the United Nations system have continued to make efforts to improve the conditions of Palestinian women. Many of the initiatives undertaken by the entities of the United Nations system have been aimed at long-term sustainable development for Palestinian people, including women. It is important that the United Nations entities continue to assist Palestinian women in coping with the socio-economic difficulties they face as a result of the conflict. Palestinian women continue to require assistance with income-generating projects aimed at poverty alleviation, education and training, access to health care and health-care services, and with ongoing advocacy initiatives aimed at combating violence against women and protecting their fundamental human rights. Member States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions should intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women. These targeted efforts should be accompanied by increased efforts to visibly address gender dimensions in all activities of support and assistance to the Palestinian people in the socio-economic and humanitarian fields.

47. While the reports by relevant bodies provided considerable information on the overall situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and made reference to women, limited information was provided on the specific situation of women and girls. The specific impacts of the crisis on women, as compared to men, should be highlighted so that targeted actions can be taken to mitigate gender-specific negative impacts. Gender perspectives should be more fully integrated into international assistance programmes through, inter alia, in-depth gender analysis and the collection of data disaggregated by sex. Gender

perspectives should also be fully incorporated into all studies and reports undertaken by the United Nations on the Palestinian people in order to effectively assess the impact of the situation of Palestinian women.

48. Since the status and living conditions of Palestinian women are linked to achieving a peaceful resolution of the conflict, additional efforts need to be made by the international community to end the violent confrontations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In that regard, it is particularly important that women are fully involved in all conflict-resolution and peacebuilding initiatives to be undertaken in the region, in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). It is also important that efforts be made to increase women's full participation in decision-making processes at all levels.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/59/35), para. 26.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., para. 25.

[4] International Labour Organization, "The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories", International Labour Conference, 92nd session, 2004 (ILO, 2004), para. 18.

[5] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/59/35), para. 26.

[6] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 13* (A/59/13), para. 6.

[7] International Labour Organization, "The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories", International Labour Conference, 92nd session, 2004 (ILO, 2004).

[8] World Bank, "Palestinian perceptions of their quality of life and of the current economic environment", *West Bank and Gaza Update* (2004).

[9] World Bank, "Recent economic developments", *West Bank and Gaza Update* (2004).

[10] International Labour Organization, "The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories", International Labour Conference, 92nd session, 2004 (ILO, 2004), para. 90.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., para. 72.

[13] Ibid., para. 79.

[14] Ibid., para. 91.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics 2004 youth survey.

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The situation of women and girls in Afghanistan**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In compliance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2004/10, the present report presents an overview of the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan in 2004, with particular focus on the new Constitution and electoral participation. It includes information on activities taken by the United Nations system in support of the work of the Government of Afghanistan towards the advancement of women and gender equality.

The report notes that while the status of women and girls has improved, overall progress has been uneven. The volatile security situation and traditional social and cultural norms continue to limit women's and girls' role in public life and deny them the full enjoyment of their rights. The massive needs in terms of reconstruction of infrastructure and strengthening of human capacity, including in the fields of education and health care, will require the sustained attention and support of national actors and the international community for many years to come.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.
** The submission of the present report was delayed due to the need for further consultations with relevant departments.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in compliance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2004/10 on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session on progress made in the implementation of that resolution.

2. The report contains information on new political, social and economic developments affecting Afghan women since the submission of the last report (E/CN.6/2004/5), with particular focus on the new Constitution and women's participation in the electoral process. It draws on information provided, inter alia, by the United Nations and its system of organizations[1] and concludes with a set of recommendations.

3. During the past few years, Afghan women have made important strides in the enjoyment of their human rights and political participation. At the normative level, the new Constitution enshrines gender equality as one principal building block of the new Afghan society. Access to education for girls has improved. Gender equality is increasingly becoming a concrete goal, guiding Government policies, development programmes and the national budget. Recognizing the powerful force for change of religious leaders, a number of United Nations system entities have successfully worked with this group, particularly in raising their support for women's and girls' access to health care and education.

4. This remarkable progress, however, is overshadowed by the persistently volatile and unstable security situation, the ongoing violence against women and girls as well as extreme poverty. Women's gains outside the main cities have been slow and uneven, and strong traditional social and cultural norms continue to prevent women and girls from fully enjoying their human rights. Moreover, years of conflict and violence have destroyed the nation's limited infrastructure, which has reduced the country's potential for further progress in almost every area of social and economic development and will necessitate the comprehensive and sustainable support of national actors and the international community for years to come.

II. Intergovernmental processes

5. Throughout the reporting period, the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan was examined in various United Nations forums, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and two functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council (the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights).

6. Three reports of the Secretary-General[2] to the Security Council and the General Assembly on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security addressed the participation of women in the election process and pointed to the continued threats to the country's stability posed by extremist violence, factionalism and the narcotics industry.

7. The Security Council, in its resolution 1536 (2004), encouraged Afghan authorities to enable an electoral process that provided for full voter participation, including that of women and refugees. It also requested the United Nations

Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), to continue to assist the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission in the full implementation of the human rights provisions of the new Afghan constitution, in particular regarding the full enjoyment by women of their human rights.

8. The independent expert of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan noted in his report (A/59/370) to the General Assembly that the human rights situation of women in Afghanistan remained of serious concern. In his report to the Commission on Human Rights at its sixtieth session (E/CN.4/2004/48/Add.2), the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living stressed the need to ensure women's rights with respect to housing and land.

III. Implementation of the Bonn Agreement

A. Berlin Conference and donor support

9. The Berlin Conference (31 March-1 April 2004) provided an important opportunity to reaffirm the goals of the Bonn Agreement, evaluate progress in implementation and decide upon a future work plan.

10. The Berlin Declaration adopted at the International Conference on Afghanistan outlined a number of commitments between the Afghan Government and the international community and stated that all efforts to build a new Afghanistan must also reflect the aspirations of the civil society that is taking root in the country and promote the participation of women according to their rights under the Constitution. At the Conference, the Afghan Government presented a work plan entitled "The Way Ahead", which proposed various actions in the areas of political rights, security, institution building, development, rule of law and human rights. In the work plan, the Government committed itself to pay particular attention to the participation of women as voters and candidates in the Afghan elections, to implement management training programmes in order to ensure that those men and women excluded from educational opportunities because of war have access to administrative positions, and to ensure that all girls and boys complete a compulsory education of nine years and are given the opportunity to continue at higher levels, with special attention paid to the inclusion of girls who have been denied access to education. In the work plan the Government expressed its commitment to ensuring that its policies and programmes promote the participation of women in all sectors. It also pledged to promote increased recruitment, guarantee equal opportunities to women in the civil service and ensure that gender perspectives are mainstreamed within all sectors, programmes and policies.

11. As a follow-up to the Berlin Conference, the Afghanistan Development Forum met in Kabul from 20 to 22 April 2004 at the ministerial level to discuss how the pledges made in Berlin could be translated into specific programmes. The meeting emphasized such cross-cutting themes as gender, human rights and the environment. Investment in security and the rule of law as prerequisites for all other activities were also emphasized. The Berlin Conference and the Afghanistan Development Forum marked the transition to medium-term planning for sustainable development, with full Government ownership and participation in the process.

B. Constitution

12. In 2003, women made up 20 per cent of the Constitutional Loya Jirga delegates. With substantial lobbying and advocacy efforts by different stakeholders, the Constitutional Loya Jirga enshrined the equality of women and men in the Constitution adopted on 4 January 2004. The new Constitution falls in line with the constitutions of other Islamic countries.

13. Under article 6 of the Constitution, the State is obliged to create a prosperous and progressive society based on social justice, preservation of human dignity, protection of human rights, realization of democracy, attainment of national unity as well as equality between all peoples and tribes and to balance development of all areas of the country. Article 7 requires the State to observe the Charter of the United Nations, inter-state agreements, as well as international treaties to which Afghanistan has joined, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

14. Article 22 states that any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden and that the citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law. A number of articles directly impose obligations on the State for the advancement of women. Article 44 notes that the State shall devise and implement effective programmes to create and foster balanced education for women. Article 53 requires the State to render necessary aid to women without caretakers and article 54 requires the State to adopt necessary measures to attain the physical and spiritual health of the family, especially of the child and mother and to eliminate traditions contrary to the principles of the sacred religion of Islam. Articles 83 and 84 guarantee women's representation in both houses of parliament.

15. The relationship between the sources of Afghan law, namely the Constitution, statutory law, Sharia, customary law and international norms, especially international human rights instruments to which Afghanistan is a party, is not explicitly addressed in the Constitution. It will be critical to ensure that these sources of law are applied in a manner that does not restrict women's rights. Although the Government had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women before the Constitutional Loya Jirga, the Constitution does not include a comprehensive definition of equality and protection from discrimination on the basis of sex. Neither does it explicitly address specific protections to ensure women's rights to freely choose a spouse and to citizenship.

16. Furthermore, the Constitution does not require the Government to take the measures necessary for its implementation through legislative, administrative and judicial steps. The challenge will be to enact enabling legislation to put in place the legal and judicial systems required for the full protection of those rights guaranteed to women and girls in the Constitution and in the international treaties to which Afghanistan is a party. The composition of the judiciary and their sensitivity regarding gender equality will be crucial to individual and collective efforts to access justice and to the way women's rights are interpreted and implemented.

C. Elections

17. Under the Bonn Agreement, presidential and national assembly elections were to be held two years after the convening of the emergency Loya Jirga, that is by

June 2004. While the Constitution provided that every effort be made to enable presidential and national assembly elections to be held at the same time, the Joint Electoral Management Body decided on 9 July 2004 to hold the elections on separate dates due to a number of legal and technical issues, such as the lack of accurate census figures, the timelines for the registration of parties and candidates and the delineation of district boundaries.

18. The voter registration process began on 1 December 2003 in eight regional centres, gradually expanded to all provincial capitals and district centres and ended on 20 August 2004. A total of 10.5 million voters were registered; of these, 4 million — or 41.3 per cent — were women. The fact that women made up more than 40 per cent of all registered voters is an indication of the changes in the political climate of Afghanistan. However, women did not register evenly throughout the country. While in Dai Kundi (52 per cent) and Faryab (53 per cent), more women than men registered, in some provinces such as Oruzgan (2 per cent), Helmand (7 per cent) and Zabol (11 per cent), only small numbers of women registered. Throughout the southern region, only 21 per cent of women registered, and, in Pakistan, women made up 27 per cent of registered voters.

19. The causes of such uneven participation by women are numerous and include the overall security situation, high levels of illiteracy among women, cultural restrictions and lack of support or open hostility from male family members, time constraints due to household and family responsibilities and restricted access to information. Numerous reports were made of women being threatened when they attempted to register, often by male family members or local leaders. By election day, 12 people, including 4 women, had been killed and 33 persons had been wounded in attacks against election workers.

20. To encourage women's registration, UNAMA and the Joint Electoral Management Body took a number of steps, such as setting up separate registration centres reserved for women, hiring women registration staff and outreach efforts targeted at women voters and at raising men's understanding of women's right to vote. Special registration sites were organized in conjunction with special events such as International Women's Day. Women were also offered the choice between being photographed or fingerprinted for identification purposes. To encourage wider support for women's political participation, tribal and religious leaders played a key role by calling for women's registration. For example, as reported by OHCHR, the Ullama Shura (religious scholars council) of Kandahar issued a fatwah encouraging women's political participation, which stated: "All of us need to register our women and support the ongoing registration process. If the women of our neighbouring countries can proactively participate in elections why not the females of Afghanistan. This is the rudimentary political right of every individual to actively contribute in the upcoming election." However, despite significant efforts to hire women registration and election day staff, more men than anticipated were hired to staff both women's registration centres and polling stations due to traditional social and cultural limitations preventing women from participating in public life.

21. In March 2004, the Gender Advisory Group established the Election Task Force, chaired by the UNAMA Gender Adviser, which monitored the participation of women in the electoral process. The Election Task Force will continue its work focusing on women's participation in the national assembly election.

22. In June, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and UNAMA began a process of monitoring political rights, with particular focus on violations of freedoms of expression, assembly, association and movement. The joint reports[3] noted some threats and grenade attacks against women active in the electoral process, the tearing off and defacing of campaign materials belonging to women candidates and the use of night letters that warned women, particularly election officials, to halt their work. On several occasions, the Commission was able to intervene to safeguard women's political rights.

23. The first-ever direct election was held on 9 October 2004. The Joint Electoral Management Body certified Hamid Karzai, the interim president, as the winner of the presidential election with 55.4 per cent of the vote. One woman, Masooda Jalal, a physician, ran as an independent candidate. She polled sixth with 1.1 per cent of the votes, ahead of 12 other candidates.

24. The electoral law, passed by the Cabinet in May 2004, applies to the elections of the president, the lower house, the house of elders, provincial and district councils. The Constitution provides for a minimum representation of women in both houses of parliament. According to article 83 of the Constitution, at least two women should be elected from each province with the aim of guaranteeing a minimum of 68 seats or 27 per cent for women in the lower house, which consists of 249 seats and is proportional to the population in the provinces. This provision was included in the Constitution as a result of intensive lobbying and advocacy by women in the Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).[4] For the house of elders, the Constitution provides in article 84 that the President appoints one third of the members, of which 50 per cent are to be women.

25. The electoral system for the national assembly elections is based on single non-transferable votes with multiple-seat constituencies, which allows candidates to run as individuals or as nominees of a political party, but does not provide for party lists. A proportional system based on party lists would be more advantageous to increasing women's representation, as the experience of many countries, including those emerging from conflict, has shown.[5]

26. The successful conduct of free and fair national assembly elections in the spring of 2005 will require an improvement in the security situation, a continued disarmament process and realistic census figures. The further registration of voters should be organized, with a special focus on provinces with low numbers of women registered and with special attention on young and newly eligible voters.

D. Ministry of Women's Affairs

27. As agreed at the Berlin Conference, the Ministry of Women's Affairs monitors progress in gender mainstreaming and leads, with the support of the Gender Advisory Group, the process of determining projects to be funded and implemented by various ministries within the framework of the national development budget. Four priority areas were identified, namely health, education, legal protection and economic empowerment. In May 2004, the Ministry of Women's Affairs assumed the secretariat function of the Gender Advisory Group.

28. To strengthen capacity for gender mainstreaming within line ministries, the Ministry of Women's Affairs conducted, with the support of the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP), training for senior officials from the ministries of education, health, commerce, planning and justice. Training for other ministries is being planned. Furthermore, with the support of bilateral donors, a gender adviser has been placed in the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and gender units are planned to be established in the ministries of the interior, justice, commerce, finance and labour and social affairs in 2005.

29. Since March 2003, the Ministry of Women's Affairs' role as advocate for gender equality and catalyst within the Government has been supported by UNDP and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which have posted a team of experts to the Ministry. UNDP's focus has been on strengthening the institutional capacity of the Training and Advocacy Department and the Policy and Public Relations Department, while UNIFEM's interventions have focused on the Ministry's capacity in terms of planning, development budgeting, research and statistics, foreign relations, NGO relations and cultural affairs. To strengthen gender knowledge and skills among Government officials and staff, the Ministry and Kabul University established a Gender Training Centre.

30. The Ministry of Women's Affairs continued to gradually extend its reach from Kabul to 31 provincial departments of women's affairs. The Ministry hosted two meetings with representatives of the provincial offices which addressed the role of the Ministry in the promotion and implementation of the Constitution, ways of promoting women's access to education, health and legal aid; and women's economic empowerment. UNAMA is in the process of launching a project to build the capacity of the provincial departments of women's affairs to respond to the special needs of women and girls in rural areas. In preparation for the national assembly elections, the focus of activities will be on facilitating interaction between the centre and the provinces to strengthen the political participation of women at the provincial, district and community levels. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) provided support to the Ministry's provincial offices and to the development of its own web site.[6]

31. In light of the increased areas of responsibility transferred to the Ministry of Women's Affairs, continued support in terms of funding and technical assistance is needed to enhance its capacity to fulfil its mandate and role as the national machinery for women. Increased capacity in all ministries to integrate gender perspectives would greatly complement the work of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. This would require full Government support and the adoption of an overall strategy on gender mainstreaming by the Cabinet.

IV. Overall security situation

32. Security is typically described by both the Government and the people, whether women or men, as their primary concern. The security situation remains critical, particularly outside of Kabul, and has deteriorated in some parts of the country. Many parts of the country are still under control of armed militias led by local commanders and by groups engaged in the illicit drug trade. Murder, robbery, theft, rape, kidnapping, unlawful seizure of property and other common crimes are reported to be on the rise. Women and girls are specifically affected by lack of security, since it limits their freedom of movement to reach schools, health-care facilities and work. In mostly traditionally conservative areas, at least 11 incidents

have been confirmed that have affected girls' schooling, including arson and explosive attacks. Some attacks on women government officials, journalists, potential political candidates, teachers, NGO activists and humanitarian aid workers seem to have the specific goal of intimidating them and undermining all efforts to strengthen women's status in society. Not only have Afghans been targeted, but increasingly international organizations and their staff have become targets of violence, which may affect the level of international support to the country. Fear of further attacks on humanitarian organizations led to the withdrawal of Médecins sans Frontières from Afghanistan on 28 July 2004. In the autumn, three international United Nations staff members in Kabul were abducted for nearly a month.

33. Despite the presence of the International Security Assistance Force and a nearly 15,000 soldier-strong army and 30,000 strong police, the goal of assuring sustained security to the population proved to be elusive. More than 4,000 police officers, including a small number of women, have received at least one year's training at the police academy. Efforts to recruit and train women to serve as police officers must be enhanced. Furthermore, the presence of women civilian police advisers could help increase the number of Afghan women police officers and serve as important role models. Mandatory gender sensitivity training should be provided to all police. The need for Afghanistan to have a trained and properly equipped national police force is acute, both for long-term State-building and in the context of the upcoming national assembly elections.

34. Insufficient progress has been made in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of factional and militia forces. At the Berlin Conference, the Government of Afghanistan committed itself to achieving the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of no less than 40 per cent of the estimated troop strength of 100,000 Afghan militia forces as well as the cantonment of all heavy weapons under credible supervision prior to the presidential elections. As of November 2004, Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme, supported by UNDP, reported that more than 22,000 former soldiers had been disarmed and that 88 per cent of all heavy weapons considered operational or repairable have been cantoned. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in Afghanistan has attempted to integrate gender aspects in its activities by integrating ex-combatants' families into the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, tailoring information campaigns to women and carrying out social impact monitoring in the communities.

35. The removal of landmines is a prerequisite for reconstruction activities, the resumption of social and economic activities and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. Data collected by the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan indicates that 12 per cent of the victims of mines and unexploded ordnance are women. The Centre is currently conducting a survey that will improve the information available on the impact of mines and unexploded ordnance. Survey teams will include husband and wife teams to ensure the collection of comprehensive data. Women mine risk education trainers are employed by the United Nations Mine Action Programme to reach out to women and children.

36. The Afghanistan Opium Survey 2004, released by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on 18 November 2004, found that opium cultivation increased by 64 per cent compared to 2003 and spread to all of Afghanistan's provinces. Drug

exports accounted for more than 60 per cent of the 2003 gross domestic product (GDP) and continued to be a major threat to the country's stability.

37. The deterioration of the security situation must be addressed resolutely in order to ensure that women and girls are able to fully enjoy and exercise their human rights.

V. Peacebuilding and reconstruction

A. Human rights and violence against women

38. Women's full enjoyment of human rights continues to be limited due to the overall lack of security, different forms of violence, lack of a functioning law enforcement system and the dominance of social and cultural norms that discriminate against women.

39. Women and girls continue being abducted for forced marriage for debt release and as a means of dispute settlement or the cessation of blood feuds. The practice of giving young girls in marriage as a payment for so-called blood money continues to violate girls' right to life and physical integrity. Women are also victims of so-called honour crimes and death threats when they try to escape from a forced or arranged marriage. The lack of legal and social protection systems has left many women trapped in abusive situations which have caused a number of women to commit suicide or self-immolation.[7] There are also continuing reports of kidnapping of girls and forced virginity tests. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is supporting the establishment of a nation-wide birth registration campaign, which would safeguard children's right to an identity and age and provide girls with some protection against early marriage.

40. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission published brochures on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and posters on women's rights in the new Afghan Constitution. During the summer, the Commission conducted a survey on domestic violence interviewing over 1,000 women. This survey is the first ever of its kind and is expected to provide an overview of the magnitude of violence against women and the obstacles to overcoming it.

41. On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November 2004, a number of events were held across the country. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission organized a march in Kabul with over a thousand participants, and issued a resolution condemning all forms of violence against women. The Ministry of Women's Affairs established an inter-ministerial commission to work on an ongoing basis on violence against women. The commission includes the ministries of justice, foreign affairs, the interior, hajj and religious affairs, as well as the justice reform Commission and the Supreme Court.

42. Efforts to assist women at risk of, or survivors of, violence are starting to gain roots in Kabul, Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif, where a few shelters for women are operating. The shelters also accommodate women who, because of homelessness or being single and without family support, would be at risk of abuse or violence.[8] UNIFEM created a forum for discussion on violence against women among actors

from different governmental institutions, civil society organizations, international organizations and donors. These meetings focused on issues of violence in relation to health, education, judicial institutions and research.

43. In August, the independent expert of the Commission on Human Rights visited the women's detention centre in Kabul, which held 40 women living with their children in conditions below minimum standards. He also reported that women continue being accused by spouses and male relatives of acts that do not constitute crimes under statutory Afghan laws. The charges brought against them arise out of allegations of immoral conduct, which do not constitute legal violations.[9] In some cases, women are allegedly forced to accept responsibility for crimes committed by spouses or fathers. He further indicated that the absence of detention facilities for women in the districts has led to women being confined to the personal custody of tribal leaders for acts that may not constitute legal offences. These women are sometimes forced into slave-like conditions outside the reach of the law and are reportedly subject to sexual and physical abuse.

44. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime prison reform programme, between 300 and 400 women are estimated to be held in custody out of 4,500 detainees throughout the country. The Office is involved in the physical rehabilitation of the Kabul women's detention centre and runs a social rehabilitation programme for women detainees.

45. Cases of trafficking for the purpose of forced prostitution in neighbouring countries, as well as for forced labour, were reported, including cases of kidnapping and smuggling of children. The presence, mobility and impunity of armed factions has perpetuated trafficking and prevented the protection and assistance of victims by authorities and international agencies across Afghanistan.

46. Presently, there is no anti-trafficking legislation in the existing Afghan civil and penal codes. The Ministry of Justice commenced drafting an anti-trafficking law. This law focuses, however, only on child victims. A committee chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has been established to address child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. A national action plan against child trafficking was submitted to the Cabinet for approval. IOM, through its capacity-building to counter trafficking programme, continued to raise awareness and strengthen capacity in this area, including for staff in the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Women's Affairs. UNICEF is conducting child rights trainings for religious leaders, police and Government officials with a focus on anti-trafficking.

47. Women returnees, widows and female-headed households face numerous obstacles to their right to adequate housing. This is mainly due to: forced eviction and the illegal occupation of land; difficulties in claiming inheritance; increased speculation on housing and land; forced marriages of widows to ensure that land and property remain within the family; and the inability to obtain access to courts.

48. To support the Government in its implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is preparing a two-stage capacity-building programme. This is due to start in early 2005 with consultations with high-level officials in key ministries to identify

challenges, opportunities and obligations arising from the Convention, followed by the training itself.

49. OHCHR is compiling documentation on human rights violations during the period from 1978 to 2001, which complements a national consultation process organized by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. It is expected that both processes would address the past violations of women's human rights, in particular those that took place during the Taliban regime.

50. Women's inability to access the judicial system remains a challenge to addressing violations of their rights. The restrictions on movement without a male relative severely limits a woman's ability to report abuse by her family to the authorities. Other factors denying women redress for violations of their rights are: the lack of official reporting mechanisms; lack of knowledge of statutory laws by those who administer justice; insufficient understanding and sensitivity of officials towards the needs of victims; a high reliance on customary dispute resolution mechanisms; limited trust in law enforcement structures due to the long-term conflict and factional and ethnic divisions; and the perceived shame surrounding crimes of sexual violence. Victims fear for their safety if families push for police investigations.

51. In his report to the General Assembly in September 2004 (A/59/370), the independent expert of the Commission on Human Rights recommended that a comprehensive plan be developed on the rule of law, including law enforcement, prosecution, the judiciary and prisons. Such a plan would also have to ensure that women have full access to justice and that police, judges and prosecutors are trained in women's rights.

52. Limited progress has been made in strengthening Afghan women's and girls' full enjoyment of their human rights. A concerted effort and long-term strategy by the Government and civil society with support of the international community will be necessary to build a culture of respect for human rights and dignity of all Afghans and to end impunity for all forms of violence against women and girls, whether committed in the public space or within families.

B. Return of refugees and internally displaced persons

53. More than 2.7 million refugees returned through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)-assisted voluntary repatriation between March 2002 and July 2004. Of those, some 46.5 per cent were women. Government estimates indicate that at least 2.5 to 3 million Afghans still remain outside the country, in addition to approximately 200,000 internally displaced persons in the south and the south-west of the country.

54. To integrate principles of gender equality into all areas of the work of the Ministry of Repatriation and Refugees, UNHCR has supported the creation of capacity-development advisers, including gender advisers, in the Ministry and its main departments in the provinces. Female staff of the Ministry now work alongside UNHCR staff in encashment centres, in internally displaced persons camp management, in beneficiary selection for shelter and in the referral and follow-up of extremely vulnerable returnees. UNHCR has also brought together women community opinion leaders in two peace education workshops. Within the

framework of the women's development centres, UNIFEM currently operates five centres for internally displaced persons in two provinces, which provide vocational training and literacy programmes.

55. The IOM Afghanistan Transition Initiative supports recovery, rehabilitation and political development by building citizens' confidence in the process of political and economic development, empowering citizens to address basic community needs and promoting democracy by encouraging interaction between communities and local, provincial and national government officials. IOM's Quick Impact Projects support small infrastructure projects such as water systems, road related activities, rehabilitation of government buildings, and the construction of post offices and market centres.

56. Sustained attention by different ministries and international actors to the reintegration of women and girl refugees and internally displaced persons in Afghan society is needed, while simultaneously ensuring their security, land and housing rights, health, education and income-earning possibilities.

C. Health

57. Article 52 of the Constitution requires the State to provide free preventive health care and treatment of diseases as well as medical facilities to all citizens in accordance with the provisions of law. Women's access to quality health care continues to be impeded by restrictions on movement, security concerns and an acute lack of trained female health staff. The maternal mortality rates remain very high and great variations between rural and urban areas are due to the uneven availability of and access to obstetric care. Badakhshan province still reports the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, recording 6,500 deaths per 100,000 live births. Tuberculosis is also a major killer, with 70 per cent of those affected being women. Women's vulnerability to acute depression and suicide is also high.

58. To address these challenges, the Ministry of Health has prioritized the provision of good quality and affordable health care to mothers and children. A basic package of health services has been developed, with special attention to the health of lactating mothers and newborn babies. The Ministry of Health, with support from UNICEF and NGO partners, is establishing and/or upgrading one health facility per province to perform emergency obstetric care services. Currently, 25 out of 34 provinces have such services. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has provided reproductive health kits to hospitals and NGOs working in remote areas in 22 provinces. While a number of agencies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), have supported the training of midwives and nurses in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, the need for qualified female medical staff will remain critical for years to come. In addition, the Ministry, with the help of UNICEF and WHO, continues to implement a three-year (2003-2005) plan to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus. To ensure successful immunization and maternal health programmes, the Ministry and international organizations increasingly sought the support of religious leaders. To date, the vaccination programme has reached over 3 million women, largely due to the fact that the majority of those giving vaccinations are female.

59. Special attention was paid to malnutrition among women and children. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) held workshops in

a number of provinces, including Bamiyan and Badakhshan, to improve food security, livelihoods, health and the nutrition situation. The World Food Programme (WFP), in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and other partners, started a small-scale wheat flour fortification project in Kabul, which was expanded to Badakhshan province. The introduction of flour fortification is expected to improve the health of pregnant women.

60. Many Afghan women use opium as a painkiller and tranquilizer, including for their children. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in close collaboration with UNIFEM as well as the Ministries of Health and Education, has an ongoing project focusing on drug demand reduction. Through this project, 25 women trainers from eight NGOs were trained in October 2004 on drug abuse prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

61. There remains an urgent need to further improve the physical infrastructure of health facilities across the country and, more importantly, to enhance competency-based education and training for health professionals, including midwives, obstetricians and female doctors and nurses.

D. Education

62. Article 44 of the new Afghan Constitution calls on the State to devise and implement effective programmes to create and foster balanced education for women and eliminate illiteracy in the country. According to UNICEF, about 80 per cent of women over the age of 15 are illiterate, compared to 51 per cent of men. Girls account for 34 per cent of the total enrolment of more than 4 million children throughout the country. However, wide gender disparities persist. In many provinces, girls represent less than 15 per cent of the total enrolment. UNICEF estimates that 1.5 million girls of school age are not enrolled in classes. The security situation, distance from home and inadequate facilities are the main reasons cited by families for not sending their children, particularly their daughters, to school.

63. A significant number of girls missed up to seven years of schooling during the Taliban era and, as a consequence, had to enrol in classes with younger children, which often discouraged them from attending school at all. To provide this group of students with "catch-up" classes, in the winter of 2004, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education managed an accelerated learning programme in five provinces. More than 45,000 children, over 80 per cent of them girls, benefited from these accelerated classes. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is exploring ways to strengthen the linkage between non-formal and formal education. WFP provided food aid to those attending basic literacy as well as health education classes. To increase the enrolment of girls, families are provided with a monthly oil incentive. Some 500,000 girls are targeted through the programme.

64. The increase of students has placed great strains on the school infrastructure, resulting in overcrowded classrooms with poor facilities. WFP, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and other partners, supported through a food-for-work scheme the building of 13 schools equipped with latrines, potable water facilities and furniture.

65. The Ministry of Education, with the support of UNICEF, has developed a new curriculum, syllabuses and teacher education programmes for primary school grades, which are expected to be available in the form of new textbooks, and has improved teacher accreditation and standards in 2005. Since the shortage of female teachers remains an additional obstacle to girls' education, UNICEF organized programmes to improve the abilities of teachers. Of those participating in the programmes, about 30 per cent were women.

66. In a new initiative to overcome resistance to girls' education, UNICEF and the Ministry of Religious Affairs brought together religious leaders who had signed a declaration in 2003 setting out their commitment to promoting education for all, improving child and women's health and providing better protection for children. Since then, UNICEF has supported sensitization programmes for religious leaders at the provincial level.

67. Given the high illiteracy rates and low education levels in the country in general, further intensified efforts are needed to accelerate the building of schools in all provinces and to increase the number of qualified teachers, in particular female teachers, at all levels of education. Continued efforts are needed to overcome resistance to girls' education, increase the enrolment rates of girls and support those women and girls who were excluded from education in the past.

E. Participation in the economy

68. According to article 48 of the Constitution, work is the right of every Afghan, and Afghans are free to choose their own occupation within the limits of the provision of law. Article 50 prohibits the State from discriminatory hiring practices. The economic empowerment of women enhances women's status and agency, sustains their families and communities and contributes to the national reconstruction processes. However, the current economic status of women is characterized by limited access to credit and new technologies, a high unemployment rate and scarcity of income-generating opportunities.

69. Most women who are able to find employment do so with the Government or NGOs. At the Berlin Conference, the Government committed itself to increasing the number of women in the civil service.[10] In this context, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has developed a plan of action with the relevant Government institutions, including the Civil Service Commission, for the employment of women. To promote women's employment, UNHCR provided support in the establishment and/or rehabilitation of childcare centres for over 450 children of women government employees, in 4 provinces and with 7 different ministries.

70. Several United Nations entities, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM and WFP, have supported a number of income-generation, skills development and vocational training projects. These include animal husbandry, quilt-making, urban bakeries, furniture repair, knitting, tailoring and carpet-weaving. National women's NGOs also run hundreds of job-creation projects to teach women how to make and market honey, textiles, rugs, clothing, pasta, cement blocks and other products, thus contributing to their income-earning potential. However, the sustainability of small vocational training projects remains a challenge.

71. Women need more support for their products in order to gain a competitive advantage in the market. In 2003, UNIFEM launched the Afghan Women's Business Council through a partnership between women entrepreneurs and leading Afghan NGOs engaged in entrepreneurial activities. The ILO International Training Centre project on women's entrepreneurship development built capacities and developed the skills of business development service providers who target women at both the governmental and NGO levels. Some 75 Afghan women trainers, business advisers and handicraft specialists were trained in the field of enterprise development and handicraft quality improvement. The ILO microfinance for employment project provided support to three NGOs with a strong focus on women's efforts to transform their credit activities into sustainable microfinance institutions.

72. However, although women are now officially allowed to seek employment, their access to work is still impeded by lack of security, restrictions on travel and general negative views on women's participation in public life. Enhanced efforts are needed to address these challenges in order to accelerate women's access to employment, income-earning opportunities, credit and technical and professional skills training.

F. Civil society and community development

73. There is a growing number of national NGOs working on women's issues. The Ministry of Women's Affairs made efforts to bring together the main NGO coordinating bodies in Afghanistan and to foster a shared commitment to women's rights and gender equality. Recently, the Afghan Women's Network, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, the Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau and the Afghan network of women councils formed the Afghan NGO Coordination Council.

74. With funding and support by UNIFEM, a number of women's NGOs have conducted awareness-raising and training programmes on women's rights and provided legal aid for women. The Afghan Women Lawyers and Professionals Association published and disseminated a book on women's rights in the constitution. The Afghan Women Lawyers Council provided training to women on the electoral registration process. The Afghan Women Judges Association provided training sessions to women judges and attorneys who were unable to practice during the Taliban regime and offered free legal counselling to women in Kabul and surrounding provinces. UNIFEM also continued its support to women's development centres at provincial and community levels.

75. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) National Solidarity Programme strengthened community governance and supported community-led reconstruction programmes through capacity-building and training. The scarcity of basic services and infrastructure affects women as they deal with water, sanitation, fuel and waste management in their domestic chores. In its strategy to encourage women to take a leading role in the management of basic services, UN-Habitat supported the establishment of 403 women's community development councils.

76. The growing involvement of women in NGOs and community groups is an important opportunity for women to increase their role in public life. Consequently, any reports of targeted attacks and threats against women's rights advocates must be

taken seriously, and stronger measures are needed to ensure safety and to identify and bring to justice those who seek to undermine the work of women's NGOs.

VI. Coordination mechanisms

77. During the reporting period, the United Nations, donors and international NGOs have continued to support the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Office of the State Minister for Women's Affairs and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission as well as local and provincial institutions. The Gender Advisory Group, which includes representatives from the Government, the United Nations, donors and civil society, promoted the mainstreaming of gender issues in the policies and programmes of various ministries. To provide a more focused and well-coordinated support to the Government, the Gender Advisory Group has undertaken an initiative to develop a national gender programme, with support from several donors, in line with the priorities of the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

78. Throughout the year, the UNAMA Gender Unit facilitated regular information and knowledge-sharing among the members of the network comprised of gender focal points in 12 United Nations agencies and provided technical assistance to individual agencies in the areas of training, gender analysis of staffing and activity reporting. The Unit continued to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all activities of the mission, with special attention to political processes, human rights and the rule of law. Gender focal points were created in each of the eight field offices, providing assistance to Government institutions, women's NGOs, civil society groups and United Nations agencies.

79. In line with the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13, UNAMA established a focal point and alternate focal point to receive complaints on sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

VII. Conclusion and recommendations

80. **Despite a relatively short period since the fall of the Taliban, Afghan women made historic gains with the support of the international community. Women came to the fore of the political life in the country and contributed to the adoption of the new Constitution, which clearly affirms equality between women and men. Afghan women's achievements include growing participation in national reconstruction efforts, increased enrolment of girls in schools and advances in access to health care.**

81. **However, women's participation in peacebuilding and reconstruction continues to be jeopardized by the security situation, which limits their participation in public life, access to education and health care and opportunities in the labour market. Significant differences exist between women's and men's enjoyment of rights, including variations between regions. Without adequate security, there can be no progress in the advancement of Afghan women. The institutional mechanisms of the Government to effectively address these issues are still in formation, and the focus on gender mainstreaming in all line ministries will require a more comprehensive strategy by the Government. The international community, for its part, will need to**

continue to provide continuous funding and coordinated support for a sustainable development process.

82. The history of Afghanistan has repeatedly shown that efforts to strengthen women's status inherently carry the danger of a backlash. The full realization of the goal of gender equality will require serious engagement and political will by national and international stakeholders. The long-term viability and success of women's gains in their constitutional rights, enhanced role in political life, peacebuilding, economic and social development depends crucially on their ability to hold the Government and the international community accountable for their commitments to Afghan women and girls.

83. Gender equality remains a crucial factor for achieving sustainable peace and democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law in Afghanistan. As the Millennium Development Goals report for Afghanistan notes, "The most important indicator of all will be the extent to which Afghanistan's development strategy centres on women."[11]

84. To strengthen further the status of women and girls in Afghanistan, the Commission on the Status of Women may wish to reconfirm earlier recommendations, most of which remain valid, and emphasize the following urgent measures:

(a) To NATO, the Afghan Government and Member States:

- **Take urgent measures to ensure the protection of civilians, particularly women and children, including through the expansion of the International Security Assistance Force outside Kabul as agreed at the Berlin Conference;**
- **Ensure women's security prior to, during and after the upcoming national assembly elections, including by adopting concrete measures for women leaders and their families;**
- **Intensify efforts for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, paying special attention to the reintegration of ex-combatants and their families into society;**

(b) To the Afghan Government:

(i) Fully implement the Constitution and all international treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Afghanistan is a party; take all necessary legislative, administrative and judicial measures at all levels for the promotion and protection of these rights; repeal all legislative and other measures that discriminate against women and girls; and organize sustained awareness-raising campaigns on the equality of women and men;

(ii) Develop a national action plan on gender equality in consultation with relevant institutions and NGOs, as required by the Beijing Platform for Action, including time-bound targets for monitoring and proposals for resource allocation;

(iii) Increase measures to strengthen women's economic empowerment and access to income-generating activities, credits, means of production, technology and resources;

(iv) Develop a long-term strategy and plan of action to strengthen the rule of law and respect for human rights; strengthen measures to end violence against women through awareness-raising, training of police, judges and prosecutors, prosecution of perpetrators and improved access for women to justice and redress mechanisms; pay particular attention to increased measures against forced marriages, including payment of "blood money" as a way of settling family debts; and develop support services for women and girl victims of violence;

(v) Prohibit the confinement of women in the custody of private individuals; release women prisoners held in State detention centres for actions that do not constitute crimes under Afghan law; and provide them with adequate support for reintegration into their communities;

(vi) Adopt a comprehensive and gender-sensitive law on trafficking in women and children and strengthen measures to prevent trafficking in women and children;

(vii) Ensure that the upcoming national assembly elections are carried out and monitored closely to ensure that women are able to register, run for office, campaign and vote;

(viii) Ensure that the Ministry of Women's Affairs has adequate human and financial resources to fulfil its mandate and role as national machinery;

(ix) Ensure the effective and equal access of women and girls to health care and education by further improving the physical infrastructure of health care and education facilities throughout the country and by enhancing education and training for health care and education professionals;

(c) To Governments, the United Nations system, donors and civil society:

(i) Encourage and support increased cooperation and coordination among all stakeholders and ensure that the necessary resources are allocated so as to maximize support for gender mainstreaming as well as targeted initiatives for women and girls;

(ii) Continue to provide financial and technical support to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and all line ministries, in order to integrate gender perspectives into their programmes and budgets;

(iii) Provide sufficient financial and technical support to the 2005 national assembly elections process in order to facilitate the full participation of women as voters and candidates;

(iv) Support the development of a long-term strategy to strengthen the judicial system according to international standards;

(v) Support measures to hold accountable those responsible for gross violations of women's human rights in the past and to ensure that full investigations are conducted and perpetrators brought to justice.

Notes

[1] Information was received from the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, FAO, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNODC, WFP and WHO.

[2] A/58/742-S/2004/230, A/58/868-S/2004/634, and A/59/581-S/2004/925.

[3] Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission-UNAMA Joint Verification of Political Rights, first report (15 June-7 July 2004); second report (8 July-24 August 2004); third report (24 August-30 September 2004).

[4] E/CN.6/2004/5, para. 22.

[5] Report of the Expert Group Meeting, "Enhancing women's participation in electoral processes in post-conflict countries", Glen Cove, New York, 2004, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and Department of Political Affairs (EGM/ELEC/2004 REPORT).

[6] http://www.mowa.gov.af.

[7] The criminology register of the hospital in Herat listed 56 incidents of burning between March 2003 and April 2004, of which four were men and 52 were women. Of these, 32 women died. Institute for War and Peace Reporting, "Abused women driven to suicide", 29 April 2004.

[8] See for example, "Between Hope and Fear: Intimidation and Attacks against Women in Public Life in Afghanistan", Human Rights Watch, October 2004.

[9] Both the civil and the criminal codes state that a person may be charged and convicted of crimes that are not expressedly mentioned in the formal law, but which violate Hanafi jurisprudence (i.e. Sharia law).

[10] According to 2003 data by the Central Statistics Office, 21 per cent of all permanent government employees were women.

[11] Afghanistan MDG report, March 2004 (http://www.undp.org/mdg/afghanistan/afghanistan_mdg.pdf).

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Joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report contains the joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for 2005 and an assessment of the implementation of the work plan for 2004. It is submitted in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 2003/44 of 23 April 2003.

* E/CN.4/2005/1.
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I. Introduction

1. On the basis of Commission on the Status of Women resolution 39/5 of 31 March 1995 and Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/43 of 11 April 1997, a joint work plan is prepared annually for the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (the work plan for 2004 is contained in document E/CN.4/2004/65-E/CN.6/2004/7). In its resolution 2003/44 of 23 April 2003, the Commission on Human Rights welcomed the cooperation and coordination between the Division and the Office aimed at mainstreaming women's human rights, and also welcomed the joint work plan and encouraged the Secretary-General to ensure its implementation and to continue to elaborate the plan.

II. Assessment of the implementation of the current work plan

2. During the implementation of the current joint work plan, the exchange of information between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has continued.

3. The Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner continued to exchange documents, reports and information relating to the work of the human rights treaty bodies and circulated those documents to the chairpersons and members of the treaty bodies. The Office continued to provide information for and comments on the reports provided by the Division to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee.

4. In the course of the year, the Division continued to suggest experts on women's rights for the training activities of the Office with respect to reporting under international human rights instruments, as well as a number of other training and technical cooperation activities, expert meetings and panel discussions.

5. The Division and the Treaties and Commission Branch of the Office of the High Commissioner continued to work closely on reporting and other matters relating to human rights treaty bodies, including pursuant to the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1). In regard to that report of the Secretary-General, the Division is part of the action 2 reference group, which is consulted by the action 2 task force on all strategic and substantive questions and provides support to the task force in the development of new tools and guidelines.

6. The Division and the Office continued coordinating their databases and web sites, as well as updating them. The Division facilitated the distribution of information pertaining to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, especially its concluding comments, through the listserv maintained by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

7. The Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner continued to cooperate with regard to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Staff

members of the Division and the Office remained in contact and exchanged information regarding issues arising under and procedures in connection with the Optional Protocol.

8. The Office and the Division facilitated the attendance of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, its causes and consequences at the thirtieth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (12-30 January 2004), at the invitation of the Committee. The Chief of the Treaties and Commission Branch of the Office also met with members of the Committee at its January 2004 session.

9. The Division contributed to and participated in the meeting of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies, organized by the Office of the High Commissioner and held from 21 to 25 June 2004 in Geneva. The Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women participated in that meeting. The Division also provided input to the background documentation for and participated in the third inter-committee meeting of the human rights treaty bodies, also organized by the Office and held in Geneva from 21 to 25 June 2004. The Division cooperated closely with the Office in developing the draft guidelines on an expanded core document (HRI/MC/2004/3).

10. The Division organized a judicial colloquium on the use of international human rights law, from 17 to 19 May 2004, and a training workshop on implementation of and reporting under the Convention from 19 to 21 May 2004 in Nassau, with the participation of an expert of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. A staff member of the Office participated in the event.

11. The Office organized a treaty reporting workshop for the preparation of Timor-Leste's initial human rights reports, held in Dili from 8 to 10 September 2004, with the participation of experts of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. A staff member of the Division also participated in the event.

12. In November 2004, the Division and the Office jointly organized a round table of national human rights institutions and national machineries for the advancement of women. The round table aimed to strengthen the capacity of national machineries for the advancement of women and national human rights institutions to promote and protect the human rights of women through the development of institutional links and joint strategies. The event was hosted by the Conseil consultatif des droits de l'homme du Maroc. Two members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women also participated. The statement adopted by the meeting is being widely disseminated by the Division and the Office.

13. The Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner continued to support improved cooperation between the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights. The Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights at its sixtieth session addressed the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-eighth session. The Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women addressed the Commission on Human Rights at its sixtieth session. On that occasion, a joint event was also organized, with the participation of the acting High Commissioner for Human Rights, the

Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Chairpersons of the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women and an expert of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as well as other United Nations, government and civil society representatives.

14. Coordination of the preparation of reports to be submitted to intergovernmental bodies continued. When requested, the Division for the Advancement of Women contributed to reports prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner, and the Office contributed to reports prepared by the Division.

15. The Office moderated the online discussion on human rights of women in November 2004, as part of a series of online discussions hosted by WomenWatch, and facilitated and moderated by members of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, in preparation for the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Summaries of the online discussions will be submitted to the forty-ninth session of the Commission.

16. The Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, continued to work on a guide to human rights and legislative practices to combat trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

17. The Division is finalizing, with the collaboration of the Office, a review of the integration of women's human rights and gender perspectives in the reports of special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights between 1996 and 2003.

18. The Division and the Office continued to cooperate within the framework of inter-agency mechanisms, and especially the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality under the leadership of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. Both participated actively in the activities of several of the Network's task forces, including those on women, peace and security; gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals; gender and trade; and indigenous women.

III. Joint work plan for 2005

19. Cooperation between the Office of the High Commissioner and the Division for the Advancement of Women will continue in 2005 to strengthen attention to the human rights of women and the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all human rights activities in the following major areas: support for human rights treaty bodies; support for intergovernmental bodies and special procedures; technical cooperation, advisory services and meetings; awareness-raising and outreach; and inter-agency cooperation. The major activities planned in those areas are outlined below.

A. Support for human rights treaty bodies

20. The Office of the High Commissioner and the Division for the Advancement of Women will continue the practice of past years of coordination, cooperation and information exchange between treaty bodies. Activities will include the exchange of documents, reports and the results of the work of the treaty bodies, and the circulation of those documents to the chairpersons and members of the treaty

bodies; follow-up to the recommendations of the sixteenth meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies and the points of agreement of the third inter-committee meeting (including providing technical assistance to countries wishing to use the draft guidelines in preparing an expanded core document, preparation of a comparative report on the working methods of all treaty bodies, preparation of a report on reservations to the core human rights treaties and preparation of a proposal on the standardization of terminology used by the treaty bodies with regard to the technical elements of their work).

21. The Division for the Advancement of Women will contribute to the preparations for and conduct of the seventeenth meeting of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies, from 20 to 24 June 2005, the fourth inter-committee meeting, also from 20 to 24 June 2005, and any ad hoc meetings in relation to the work of the treaty bodies that may be convened during 2005. The Division, the Chairperson and designated members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women will participate in those meetings. The rapporteur designated by the third inter-committee meeting on the draft reporting guidelines and other matters relating to the harmonization of their reporting guidelines, Kamel Filali, and the Chief of the Treaties and Commission Branch of the Office will attend the thirty-second session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in January 2005. The Division and the Office will jointly organize a side event on treaty body reform on that occasion.

22. Exchange of information and collaboration will continue among staff of the Office and the Division, as well as designated Committee members, with regard to communications and enquiry procedures.

B. Support for intergovernmental bodies and special procedures

23. The Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner will continue the established practice of cooperation in areas including support for the participation of the Chairpersons of the Commission on the Status of Women and of the Commission on Human Rights in each other's sessions, as well as the participation of the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in their sessions. The Division and the Office will support the convening of a possible joint meeting of the bureaux of the Commissions, via videoconference. Senior officials of the Division and the Office are again expected to address the Commissions, including in any panel discussion that may be organized in conjunction with their sessions.

24. The High Commissioner for Human Rights will participate in a high-level panel during the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women on the theme "Synergies between national-level implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women".

25. Cooperation will be enhanced in the preparation of reports on similar issues to be submitted to intergovernmental bodies, such as those relating to trafficking in women and girls and to violence against women. The Office will contribute to the in-depth study on all forms of violence against women that is being prepared by the Division in accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/185 of 22 December 2003. It participates in the task force set up by the Division on the study. The

Division will provide input to the study on violence against children prepared by the Office. Inputs and comments will be sought and provided for other reports, as requested. The Division will continue to provide targeted input for the work of special procedures.

26. The Division and the Office will jointly organize a discussion, in connection with the meeting of the special procedures office holders in June 2005, on the integration of gender perspectives into the work of the thematic mandates, based on the review concluded by the Division in 2004.

C. Technical cooperation, advisory services and meetings

27. The Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner will improve early information exchange and coordination on technical cooperation activities and cooperate whenever possible in such activities, especially with respect to training activities on reporting under international human rights instruments and follow-up to concluding comments, and cooperate in preparing and piloting training packages on international human rights instruments.

28. The Division for the Advancement of Women will contribute to the implementation of the plan of action entitled "Strengthening human rights-related United Nations action at the country level: national human rights promotion and protection systems", developed by the Office of the High Commissioner in cooperation with the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs, pursuant to action 2 of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1).

29. The Division and the Office will jointly organize a workshop on follow-up to concluding comments and recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, with the participation of representatives of both Committees, to be hosted by the Government of Egypt in 2005.

30. A staff member of the Division will participate in the annual meeting of the field representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner. Two staff members of the Division will participate in a series of briefings at the Office of the High Commissioner to share experiences in relation to the working methods and servicing of treaty bodies, intergovernmental bodies and special procedures.

D. Awareness-raising and outreach

31. The Division and the Office will continue to ensure that the electronic database covering the seven treaty bodies is up to date, fully operational and accessible to both. The web sites of the Division and the Office will also be systematically updated and improved to enhance information about human rights in general and women's human rights in particular. The Division will continue to monitor progress with respect to integrating gender perspectives in the work of intergovernmental and expert bodies.

32. The Office will publish in 2005 the revised edition of *Gender Dimensions of Racial Discrimination*, in cooperation with the Division. The Division and the

Office, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, will finalize and publish, also in 2005, the guide on human rights and legislative practices to combat trafficking in women.

E. Inter-agency coordination

33. The Office of the High Commissioner and the Division for the Advancement of Women will continue, under the leadership of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, to cooperate within the framework of inter-agency mechanisms, including particularly in respect of activities related to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), to the Millennium Development Goals, to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and to the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

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Integration of the human rights of women and the gender perspective: violence against women

Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the elimination of violence against women

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights the report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the activities of the Fund to eliminate violence against women, which was prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 50/166 of 22 December 1995.

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Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on its activities to eliminate violence against women

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Introduction

1. In its resolution 50/166 of 22 December 1995, the General Assembly requested the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to take into account the need, within its mandate, to strengthen its activities to eliminate violence against women in order to accelerate the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Beijing Declaration[1] and Platform for Action.[2] In so doing, UNIFEM works closely with the relevant agencies and bodies of the United Nations system as part of its system-wide efforts to eliminate violence against women.

2. Under the guidance of General Assembly resolution 50/166, the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women was established in 1996 and became operational in 1997, with UNIFEM as the Trust Fund's administrator. In that resolution, the Assembly positioned the Fund as a key mechanism for the advancement of the measures on gender-based violence set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Since its inception, the Trust Fund has continued to identify and support innovative and catalytic projects around the world that aim to break new ground, create new models and mobilize new constituencies in the growing movement to eliminate gender-based violence in all of its manifestations.

3. The present report to the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the sixty-first session of the Commission on Human Rights documents the activities undertaken by UNIFEM in 2004 to eliminate violence against women.

4. Through the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, UNIFEM links innovative efforts to end violence against women with opportunities to replicate and scale up successful strategies. The Trust Fund generates lessons and good practices that inform larger programmes of UNIFEM and its civil society, governmental and United Nations partners at the national, regional and global levels.

5. Since the Trust Fund began operation, it has awarded $8.3 million in grants to 175 initiatives in 96 countries. Over the past several years, the Trust Fund has experienced a dramatic increase in grant applications, which reflects the Trust Fund's unique character as a funding mecha[illegible]sm in a global context in which gender-based violence continues to be a chroni[illegible]eat [illegible]omen's lives and well-being, as well as to the dynamism of the constituency that has responded with national-level initiatives to the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action and the five-year review of its implementation.

6. The importance of enhancing efforts to finance the Trust Fund is certainly underlined by the convening of the 10-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action during the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Trust Fund has played a significant role in the changes that have been accomplished over the past decade. However, the continued and expanding disjuncture between the resources available through the Trust Fund and the requests for support to new initiatives speaks to a potential that could be realized much more fully.

I. Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women: 2004 grant making cycle

7. In October 2004, the ninth grant making cycle of the Trust Fund provided US$ 900,000 to 17 initiatives in 21 countries. As in previous years, demand for Trust Fund support far exceeded its resources, and the Trust Fund was able to fund only a fraction of the grant requests received.

8. Following the recommendations of the Consultative Committee for UNIFEM to undertake an expanded interpretation of gender-based violence in the focus and operation of the Trust Fund, and recommendations of the Trust Fund's Inter-Agency Project Appraisal Committee for UNIFEM to consider calls for proposals concentrating on specific thematic interlinkages with gender-based violence, grant making in 2004 solicited proposals focusing on strategies to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings.

9. Proposals were submitted for final review to the Trust Fund's Inter-Agency Project Appraisal Committee, which is a coordinated mechanism designed to allow the members of the United Nations system as a whole to meet together, along with members of women's civil society organizations, to determine grant allocations and the Trust Fund's long-term planning. Members of the 2004 Appraisal Committee included representatives of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations Secretariat, the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and a number of non-governmental organizations. The following 17 initiatives will be undertaken through proposals approved in the Trust Fund's ninth cycle:

- In Nigeria, the violations suffered by women in conflict zones will be addressed by bringing greater public attention to this issue and helping to create a consensus within conflict communities for the rejection of gender-based violence.
- In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, men and community leaders will be assisted in addressing attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual violence and women's rights, developing collective local strategies, and strengthening community structures for improved responses.
- In the southern Sudan, capacity will be built to document the impact of armed conflict on women, and these research results will be provided to policy makers and civil society organizations to assist in post-conflict reconstruction.
- In Darfur, an initiative will be undertaken to increase the understanding of gender-based violence among media personnel, and, through media campaigns, to increase awareness on the part of policy makers, law enforcement officials and communities of the need to address gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

- In Rwanda, an initiative will improve former female soldiers' understanding of the consequences of gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS for reproductive health, and contribute to the safe reintegration of former female soldiers into their communities.

- In the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem, awareness will be raised about the ethical duties of the health-care profession to address gender-based violence, and medical practitioners and health-care workers will be supported in developing a code of ethics for the provision of assistance to survivors of violence.

- In Nepal, radio and community discussion groups will be used to create the space for women to speak out against violence, both personal and communal, and to bring women together to effect change in their local settings.

- In Indonesia, support will be provided to a broad-based government and civil society partnership for the development of a draft law to guide the integration of services for women survivors of violence at the provincial level.

- In Fiji, an initiative will be undertaken to challenge attitudes and behaviour of young men regarding violence against women, provide young men with alternative methods of resolving conflict in their homes and communities, and empower women to take a central role in their communities' peacebuilding processes.

- In Georgia, a gender-based violence training programme for government officials in post-conflict regions will be expanded, with special emphasis on the recent conflict zones. In addition, the programme will be replicated in Azerbaijan.

- In Serbia and Montenegro, a women's network will be strengthened in its work on reconciliation and against gender-based violence across ethnic, religious and political affiliations. The initiative will also advocate for and facilitate greater application of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in peacebuilding efforts in the region.

- In Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, research and investigation into the escalation of gender-based violence and femicide will be used to identify areas in which legislation and public policies are in need of revision, and to encourage greater collective action to end impunity.

- In Haiti, support will be provided to develop the institutional capacity of women's groups at the local level to assist survivors of gender-based violence in obtaining redress, and these groups will also be supported in their efforts to create an integrated plan to combat violence against women.

- In Guyana, support will be provided to an initiative to bring greater attention to the role played by gender-based violence in ethnic conflict, and to empower women and girls in affected communities to pursue justice and equality.

- In Peru, support will be provided to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission relating to gender-based violence, which include the creation of an integrated plan to provide reparations to victims, the establishment of an interim system to

process human rights violations, and the creation of a training programme for judges.

- In Colombia, the model of the Municipality of Cordoba's Peace and Coexistence Committee — in which the local government and a broad range of social organizations joined together to design policies that advance peace and coexistence from a gender perspective — will be replicated in three other municipalities in the province of Quindío.

- In Brazil, a Trust Fund project will promote the positive use of hip hop music among youth to raise awareness about gender-based violence and encourage non-violent conflict resolution among young women and men.

10. It should also be mentioned that during 2004 there was continuing recognition of the effectiveness of Trust Fund-supported projects. The support provided in 2002 by the Trust Fund facilitated the efforts of the Human Rights Commission (COMISEDH) to incorporate a gender perspective in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Peru, including advocacy for reparations for women victims of violence in the country. The project was recognized in 2004 as one of three best projects on human rights in the country, receiving an award from Oxfam, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and CARE. Also in 2002, the Trust Fund provided a grant in support of research and documentation of the stories of women living with HIV/AIDS following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The findings of this research are currently being utilized by the National AIDS Commission of Rwanda, the Peace and Security Directorate of the African Union, and the Embassy of the United States of America in Rwanda.

II. Expanding the Trust Fund's reach and impact: replication and upscaling of Trust Fund initiatives

11. Responding to recommendations made by the Inter-Agency Project Appraisal Committee that a revised strategy should be developed for grant making, UNIFEM presented a revised Trust Fund strategy for the period 2005-2008 to the Committee for its consideration. The revised strategy, endorsed by the Committee in October 2004, encompasses specific aspects of the Trust Fund — inter alia, in the areas of impact, involvement, knowledge, efficiency and resources — that UNIFEM has identified as being in need of strengthening based on the experience derived from the Trust Fund's past eight years of operation.

12. Of particular note is the fact that under the revised strategy, Trust Fund grant making will focus on securing and supporting the vast array of laws and policies that have been created in all regions of the world to address the multiple forms of violence faced by women. One of the primary findings of the reviews undertaken by UNIFEM in 2002-2003 of the Trust Fund and other initiatives around the world, as summarized in the publication *Not a Minute More: Ending Violence Against Women*[3] — and also confirmed by the 2003 cumulative report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women (E/CN.4/2004/66 and Add.1 and 2) — is that, while there has been great progress in developing new laws and policies, their implementation remains weak, their enforcement has been uneven, and the laws and policies themselves are often not properly framed to protect

women's human rights. During the period 2005-2008, the Trust Fund will place special emphasis on providing support to governmental and non-governmental organizations in building awareness of new laws and policies, repairing deficiencies in light of human rights requirements, identifying necessary budgetary allocations for implementation, increasing the capacity of judiciaries, law enforcement and health workers to put laws into effect, and creating data-collection systems and indicators to assist in monitoring their effectiveness.

13. Reports submitted by grantees from previous grant making cycles demonstrate that the initial catalytic support received from the Trust Fund continues to yield long-term results. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Trust Fund provided support for strengthening capacities of members of the Lao Women's Union to run a centre in Vientiane for survivors of gender-based violence. In 2002, when the Women's Union had requested support from the Trust Fund, violence faced by women went largely unreported and there were no reliable statistics on sexual assault or domestic violence. Existing laws in the Lao People's Democratic Republic did not address specific issues surrounding gender-based violence. Following the set-up and operation of the centre, the Women's Union was able to document a large number of cases and present these to the Government. The success of the programme is evidenced by the Government's invitation to the Women's Union to present a bill on domestic violence, which was passed by the Laotian National Assembly in October 2004 and is awaiting its signature into law by Parliament. The Women's Union was successful in leveraging additional support from the Asia Foundation to pay for technical expertise in the drafting of the law, from the Trust Fund in 2003 to hold public hearings to raise awareness on the draft law and involve women in the legislative process, and from the Japanese Embassy in the Lao People's Democratic Republic to build a permanent crisis centre in Vientiane.

14. In Africa, Trust Fund support to the work of the African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET) with organizations of men committed to gender equality has resulted in the creation of a men's network to combat violence against women and promote gender equality in Africa. The Men for Gender Equality Now Network organized a Men's Travelling Conference through Ethiopia, Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia, sensitizing thousands of men on issues of gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. FEMNET has enhanced its support from the Trust Fund by attracting additional funding from the Heinrich Böll Foundation and UNHCR. The work of FEMNET with men's groups for gender equality was recognized by the Commission on the Status of Women at its 2004 session, where the organization was invited to participate in a preparatory expert group discussion and serve as a panellist.

15. In Mexico, the Trust Fund supported Semillas (Sociedad Mexicana Pro Derechos de la Mujer) and the Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos in addressing concerns over impunity with regard to femicides in Ciudad Juarez. For the first time, organizations representing families of victims have joined together with human rights non-governmental organizations in a common effort to underline to the Government the need for urgent and appropriate action. The Mexican Government is now providing funds to affected communities where there have been the most dramatic incidents of femicide, in order to start crèches, offer counselling on mental and emotional health, and support microenterprises through which women can market their products.

16. Trust Fund support to the All China Women's Federation has resulted in an expansion of complaint stations for domestic violence, from the Trust Fund project pilot areas in Liaoning province to other locations within the province; moreover, the work initiated in Liaoning has been replicated in Shaanxi and Jiangxi provinces. Women's federations at different levels have submitted legislative proposals on addressing domestic violence to the local people's congress and have released joint statements on formulating local policies on prevention of, and response to, domestic violence. Local policies and regulations have been produced in several provinces, prefectures and counties. Law enforcement officials and citizenry have come together to establish complaint centres for domestic violence, and 13 provinces have established shelters. In Jiangxi and Wuhan, training and awareness-raising activities directed at men are gaining momentum.

17. During 2004, UNIFEM also built upon the lessons learned from the Trust Fund by providing its own support to a number of larger-scale initiatives directed towards legislative reform, improved collection of data and statistics, anti-trafficking, health care, police responses, awareness-raising through media, and post-conflict reconstruction. Technical and financial support was provided to facilitate the passage and amendment of laws relating to domestic violence in the Philippines, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and in Zimbabwe and Fiji, support has been provided for the review of cases of existing domestic violence so that needed reforms can be identified. The collection of data and statistics regarding incidents of violence against women has been improved, with UNIFEM support, in Thailand, the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, Egypt, Mexico and Saint Lucia. UNIFEM-supported models for special cells for women and girls in police stations have been replicated across the Indian State of Rajasthan, and support to a hospital-based one-stop crisis centre has led to its mainstreaming in the policy of Thailand's Ministry of Public Health. Support to the Law Reform Commission in Sierra Leone is enabling a comprehensive review of the country's laws in relation to violence against women, and women's organizations are also being supported to help ensure the effective implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations on gender-based violence. UNIFEM support to anti-trafficking initiatives in the South Asia region has made possible a review of anti-trafficking laws aimed at identifying gender-discriminatory provisions in four countries, and support to India's National Human Rights Commission for the collection of sex-disaggregated data has made it possible to map the profiles of victims, traffickers and customers for the first time.

III. Conclusion

18. It has been 10 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and 9 years since the creation of the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, and much more is now known about effective strategies to eliminate gender-based violence; building on this, the challenges that lie ahead can be identified.

19. Great strides have been made in setting normative standards and legal frameworks, and the current challenge is to identify effective means to ensure the proper implementation and replication of good laws, and to bring deficient laws into greater conformity with human rights standards. Improved mechanisms must be developed for enforcing rights and redressing violations in order to achieve

accountability and justice. Legislative reform must be accompanied by training and reform of criminal justice systems, as so many continue to be insensitive to the needs of women victims. Some of the changes that have been made in the administration of justice — through the creation of specialized police stations, the training of the police force as a whole, and partnerships with women's non-governmental organizations — must be instituted more broadly. Violence against women must be urgently addressed in the context of HIV/AIDS, as it is one of the principal factors fuelling the pandemic. Coordinated community-level interventions must be initiated to bring together men, local government, traditional leaders, medical and legal professionals, and the leaders of women's organizations, so that the framework of international and national laws can be firmly connected to women's lived realities. We also know that ways must be found to deal with violence at multiple levels and in multiple sectors of society simultaneously, and that the root causes of violence must be addressed, including women's poor economic, social and political status.

20. Initiatives supported through the Trust Fund have made important contributions to the development of greatly increased expertise on effective strategies to eliminate violence against women in all of these areas. However, as the international community looks forward, in the context of the 10-year review of the implementation of the Platform for Action and beyond, there is an urgent need for significantly greater funding to allow Trust Fund support for innovation, upscaling, and implementation of the new strategies that have been created to continue and flourish. Furthermore, the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[4] reaffirming the outcomes of the Fourth World Conference on Women, has committed Governments around the world to combating all forms of violence against women, and has recognized the advancement of gender equality as central to all progress in achieving the Millennium Declaration's vision for the twenty-first century. The Trust Fund has a critical role to play in this endeavour. As the Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (United Nations Millennium Project 2005) has recently observed in its interim report entitled *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*:[5]

> "Although the global community has rallied to address other epidemics (such as HIV and tuberculosis), it continues to fail to respond in the same way to the epidemic of violence against women. For instance, while General Assembly resolution 50/166 established a Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women at UNIFEM, country needs and requests far outstrip the Fund's current resources ... Given its visibility and track record, the Trust Fund could serve as an important mechanism for a strong global response (chap. 9)".

It is time for the serious commitment of resources that will achieve a world free of violence against women.

Notes

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[2] Ibid., annex II.

[3] New York, UNIFEM, 2003.

[4] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[5] London, and Sterling, Virginia, Earthscan, 2005, for the United Nations Development Programme.